

LEGENDS OF VIKRAMADITTY

RETOLD IN ENGLISH PROSE

Butler,

BY

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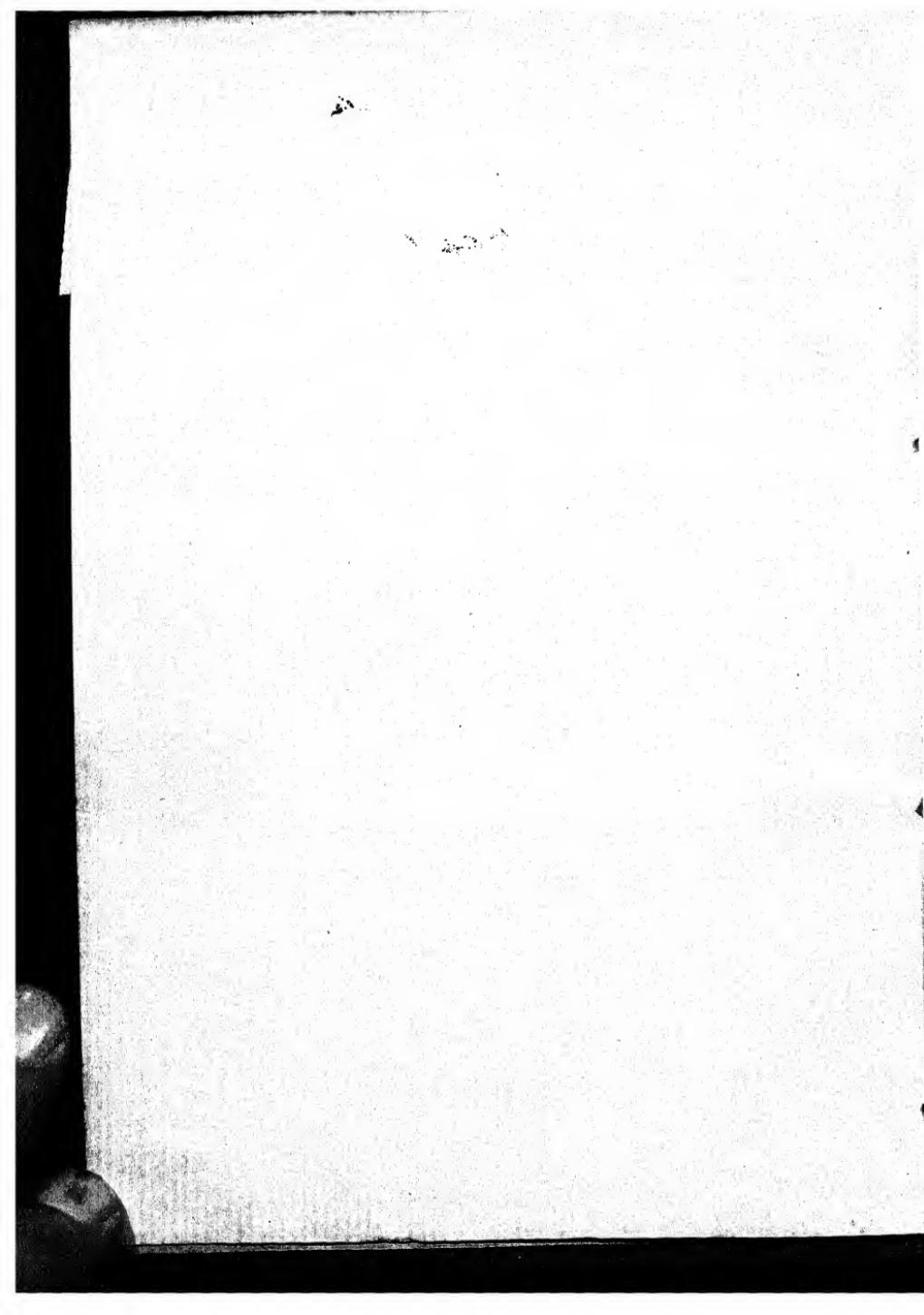
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P R E F A C E.

In the following pages an attempt has been made to render into plain English prose one of the hitherto untranslated works in the Hindi language—the *Singhasan Battisi* ('the Throne with 32 images'), a famous book dealing with the life and times of Vikramaditya. The Hindi book is itself a translation of a Sanskrit work of that name, believed to have been written by Soma Deva, date unknown. The reason why this work has so far remained untranslated into English, is that scholars have probably not thought it worth the trouble of translating, containing as it does a mere string of stories—stories too that are no better than the tales of Sheikh Chilli. Without pretending to any literary judgment, let me submit that my own opinion of the work is not half so low as that I have ventured to impute—by supposition—to those European *savants* who have earned the gratitude of Indians by their unselfish labours in the field of Indian research. To my mind *Singhasan Battisi* possesses a considerable importance in the fact that it forms a grand repository of some of the most famous folk-tales of Northern India. Whether these folk-tales owe their origin to the written book, or whether the book merely embodies in writing the popular stories that existed prior to its own origin, is a judicial problem which I must leave to the

learning of ripe scholars to solve. But probable it is that the book,—I mean the original Sanskrit book,—merely collected in one place and gave body and shape to the crude legends that existed in the form of nebulous traditions ever since the actual age of Vikramaditya.

And the actual age of Vikramaditya is as doubtful a quantity in ancient Indian History as the question of the exact origin of these traditional tales. Vikramaditya flourished in the dawn of history, and it is quite natural therefore that his name should come down to us enshrined amid a cycle of legends, and that modern criticism should begin to doubt everything about him except his existence. For example, it has already been asserted as an incontestable verity that the *Samvat* era, which has for nearly two thousand years been associated with the name of Vikramaditya, was not instituted by Vikramaditya at all,—but probably sprang forth into being from the titanic imagination of a lofty critic! And we may shortly expect it to be established, by evidence of the most conclusive type, that Vikramaditya himself was no historical personage, but merely a poetic idealization of a king,—a king more visionary than King Arthur of Arthurian romance. The least that can be said in answer to this kind of talk is that historical criticism would have no legs to stand on if it started on its investigations in a spirit of scepticism, and not in a spirit of faith. Scepticism, if allowed free play, has power even to dethrone the Supreme Being Himself, what to speak of Vikramaditya.

Nevertheless much of the information concerning Vikramaditya still lies obscured in the mists of antiquity. The one thing that *is*, however, certain about him is that he was the founder of the Samvat era; and if modern research has not been able to establish this,—well, so much the worse for modern research. His kingdom of Malwa, with its capital Ujjain, is still in existence, but under a different name—Gwalior. Ujjain retains its old name to this day, and there is nothing very surprising about this fact if we remember that the capital of a much older king—Ram Chandra, the hero of the *Ramayana*—is still known by its ancient name of Ayodhya.

A little reflection will explain why Vikramaditya has become the centre of so many tales and legends, and why these tales and legends have so long retained their hold on the popular imagination. Vikramaditya was one of the greatest monarchs that ever sat on a throne of Hindustan, and these tales and legends only afford the most striking testimony to the amazing character of his career. Indeed these myths—for many of the stories are doubtless either fabulous or grossly exaggerated—that have clustered round his name, instead of resolving Vikramaditya himself into a myth, go far to establish his historicity on a firmer basis. To compare great things with small—or small things with great, if that will please the critics—if we liken Vikramaditya to Napoleon for one moment, we shall say exactly what a modern author has said of the French Emperor: “Men looked upon him with dazzled eyes and judged him as if he

were either more or less than a mortal. The whole passage of his life upon earth was something so extraordinary that when it was ended there seemed to be no standard by which to measure it, no mental framework into which it would fit." If our learned critic can say as much of a king who moved about in the fierce light of modern days, why should he shrink from stretching back his imagination to the first century B.C., and picture to himself a Hindu sovereign who, by his heroic deeds, had impressed the minds of his own countrymen so deeply that their descendants have continued to revere his name and cherish his memory in some of the most beautiful legends that can be found in the literature of any country ?

The uncritical of us will now, I hope, have little hesitation in believing, not only that Vikramaditya was a real king, but also that he was one of the greatest monarchs that wore a Hindu crown. His name has become the centre of a cycle of Indian romance, and he has figured as the hero of a host of songs and legends which the unsophisticated (Shall I say 'uncritical'?) mind in India still believes to be authentic history. These stories bear the same relation to Indian History that the Arthurian legends of Malory or Tennyson bear to the history of England, or that the legends of Charlemagne bear to the history of the German Empire. And yet the analogy is true but in the main. For Vikramaditya's influence on the public mind in India has transcended everything recorded in the chronicles of early ages,

in what manner exactly I am unable to illustrate by a parallel instance drawn from the history of any other country in the world.

So much for the hero and his legends. A further word is probably due to this particular collection of legends which have been immortalised under the name of *Singhasan Battisi*. For there is another similar collection of legends relating to Vikrmaditya incorporated in the *Katha Sarit Sagar*, a Sanskrit work containing, as its name implies, an exhaustible mine of ancient Hindu stories. This Sanskrit work, which has been translated into English by Mr. Charles H. Tawney, formerly Principal of the Presidency College, Calcutta, is of very old date and is believed to have been originally composed by a *Pishacha*, or evil spirit, who chanced to hear or overhear the stories directly from the lips of Shiva, as the god was repeating them to his consort Parvati. Hence the work is said to have been originally written in the *Pishacha* dialect, from which it was rendered into the "language of the gods"—Sanskrit. *Singhasan Battisi* may have been written in imitation of the stories of Vikrmaditya found in the *Katha Sarit Sagar* at a later period, but when exactly cannot be maintained with precision. The Hindi version upon which I myself have relied for my labours, is by Lalluji Lal, a Hindu bard who flourished about the year 1800 A. D.

In presenting to European readers an English version of the tales, I beg to remind them that it is something worse than hearsay twice removed, being

only the translation of a translation. Translation is notoriously a process of distillation in which the fragrance of the natural flower is, contrary to laboratory results, diluted, dissipated, and destroyed, and the finished product, instead of emerging as a richer perfume, steams out of the distilling pipe sadly smelling of gas and coal. And for this inevitable unsavoury smell that pervades this little book I crave the indulgence of my kind readers, especially of those who have enjoyed the flavour of the Hindi of Lalluji Lal.

TIKRA ESTATE,
SITAPUR ;
13th September 1913. }

R. S.

LEGENDS OF VIKRMADITTYA

RE-TOLD IN ENGLISH PROSE

Once upon a time there was a Kshattriya Raja of Ujjain, named Bhoj. Bards have described his complexion to have been as bright as the full moon, indeed, so bright and fair that the untainted lustre of the sun was dimmed before the glory of his resplendent face. The Raja was rich not only in beauty of person, but also in mental and moral qualities. He was learned in every branch of knowledge and gifted with skill in every art. His generosity, justice and valour were known through the whole world. In short, he was said to have been one of the ideal Rajas of his time, or rather, of all time. The dominion over which he ruled grew rich and prosperous; his subjects loved him, and his rivals feared him; he affected the society of learned men, and masters of every art and science found a ready welcome in his court. He established a mint for the coinage of money, and opened schools and hospitals, and built works of public utility for the good of his people. He ordered Sanskrit to be made the court language, and under his patronage the ancient tongue of our forefathers was carried to a state of high perfection.

His capital Ujjain, which he had lifted from obscurity to world-wide celebrity, was itself the

most populous and flourishing city of his time, and could boast of statelier palaces and lovelier gardens than any other town upon the face of the earth. It was a centre of trade and commerce, and artisans and handcraftsmen pursuing all branches of industry known in his time, flocked into the city in thousands to carry on their trade. The commerce of the city was extensive, and propped by the enormous wealth of the country developed at an increasingly rapid rate until Ujjain became the emporium of Northern India. Peace and security within the kingdom aided the development of the country's resources and favoured the growth of the population and the increase of the national prosperity. The people were loyal to their sovereign, and felt a personal attachment to his throne out of gratitude for the peace and comfort enjoyed by them. Complete toleration was granted to all people in matters relating to faith and religion, and liberty of conscience dwelt side by side with political and social freedom. In fine, Ujjain was a model state ruled by a model prince.

The palace of Raja Bhoj was a marble structure of immense height, magnificently decorated with works of art and surrounded by some of the most beautiful works of nature. It was situated in the centre of the city, and enclosed by fine gardens full of plants bearing lovely flowers and fruits of various kinds. Birds sang among the trees, which were netted over in such a way as to convert the groves into natural aviaries. In short, the Raja's palace was a work of wonder.

Now it so happened that at one spot in the suburbs of the town a certain peasant had sown a crop of cucumber in a small field. When the crop grew he erected a bamboo scaffolding in the centre of the field from which to watch his crops. Whenever he ascended this structure he used to rave like a madman in the following strain :—“ Go and turn out Bhoj from his palace. He calls himself the Raja of Ujjain which has been my kingdom for so many years. Drag him to my presence instantly. My mind shall know no rest until I have put him to death.” Strangely enough, however, as soon as the man got down from the scaffolding, he became a sensible man again and ceased raving.

One day as the peasant was raving in his usual manner, one of the Raja’s soldiers happened to pass by that way, and hearing such insulting words spoken against his master, was so inflamed with rage that he dragged the fellow down from the scaffolding and gave him a severe slapping on the face. The poor peasant, who had become a changed man the moment he had been dragged down from his loft, was struck with shame and wonder at this sudden, and as he believed unprovoked, assault, and humbly besought the soldier to tell him for what offence he had been beaten. The soldier, taking it to be a fresh piece of contumacy on the peasant’s part, eyed him fiercely from head to foot, and told him that he had been uttering insulting words against the Raja, and further warned him that if he repeated the offence the Raja would surely have him hanged. The trembling

creature entreated the soldier not to report the matter to the Raja, and there was apparently an end of the affair.

But next day, as the peasant mounted the framework the same fit of raving came upon him again, and he hurled his words of insult and defiance against Raja Bhoj without any attempt at moderation or secrecy. This time he was overheard by a party of four soldiers who were returning by that way after executing an errand that they had been sent on. On hearing these insulting words their eyes began to flash fire, and one of them felt inclined to cut the fellow's throat at once. But the others prevented him saying that he was a mere drunkard and that they ought to take no notice of him.

Returning to the palace, however, they thought that it was their duty to report the matter to the king; so after concluding the business they had been sent on, they told the Raja that a certain peasant, who lived just outside the city bounds, was in the habit of reviling him in the foulest language. The Raja expressed a desire to hear the words with his own ears immediately. But the soldiers begged him to wait till next day, as the night was then far advanced. The Raja ordered the soldiers to attend the palace the following day at the same hour, and the soldiers made their obeisance and withdrew from the royal presence. After an hour the Raja too retired to his bed-chamber, but his mind was agitated by the thought of the green-grocer's story and he could not therefore compose himself to sleep for a long time.

As ordered the four soldiers waited upon the king next evening, and the Raja having disguised his person went out of the palace without being noticed by any one. The field in question was not far off, and it did not take them long to reach there. The green-grocer, as was his wont, mounted the scaffolding, and cried out, "Is there any servant in waiting? Go thou, and bring Raja Bhoj hither. I have ordered him repeatedly to get down from his throne, but he does not pay heed to my command. He merits punishment; I will take no rest until I have desolated this city and put its ruler to death."

The Raja was thunderstruck to hear this, and his whole body began to tremble with rage. At first he did not believe the evidence of his own ears, but when the same words, echoing again and again, caught his ears, there was not a shade of doubt left in his mind, and his wrath became tempered by reason. The soldiers begged permission to tear the fellow to pieces on the spot, but the Raja checked them, saying that there must be some mystery at the bottom of the affair, and so he decided to wait till next morning, and not to plunge into a rash deed without full inquiry.

The state of the Raja's mind can be better imagined than described. He was so filled with wrath that nothing short of the culprit's death could appease it, and yet his innate sense of justice and his deep consideration for the welfare of his subjects withheld him from passing sentence of death without giving the offender the chance of a fair trial. In this

dubious state of mind he came back to his palace and quietly went to bed. But his mind knew no rest: a hurrying train of restless thoughts streamed across his brain, and did not allow him to snatch even a moment's sleep till daybreak. He got up from his bed earlier than ever, and coming to the Court, ordered his ministers to gather together all the 'Pundits' and astrologers of the city. They came, gave the customary blessings for the Raja's long life and prosperity, and took their seats. The Raja stated that on the preceding night he had seen a farmer who raved like a madman and uttered treasonable language against the king whenever he ascended his bamboo watch-tower, and he commanded the astrologers to divine the cause of this strange phenomenon. The astrologers, after making calculations, declared that a big treasure lay buried in the field, and after pronouncing their verdict they took leave of the Raja, who duly rewarded them for their pains.

Next morning the Raja bade his ministers get together a gang of spadesmen to dig up the field. The labourers were quickly got together, and a long procession consisting of ministers, astrologers, courtiers, and workmen, headed by the Raja, moved on towards the field. The farmer was filled with consternation on seeing an army marching towards his field, but he gathered courage, and hastening to the Raja's presence made his obeisance to him. He felt that his end had arrived, that the Raja was coming down upon him with a large force to punish

him for the treason he was in the habit of uttering unconsciously. He trembled pitifully from head to foot as he knelt down before the Raja. The Raja easily understood the man's trepidation, but without saying a word to him, he ordered the labourers to dig up the field and pull down the farmer's house. The poor farmer, finding himself threatened with the extinction of his home and hearth, threw himself at the Raja's feet, and with tears entreated him to spare his humble dwelling. The Raja replied that his house had been ordered to be demolished not for any fault of his, but to discover a hidden treasure, for he had had a dream telling him that a big treasure lay buried somewhere in that field. He promised to make him ample reparation for the loss of his house and crops, and the farmer's face beamed with joy to hear this.

In a few hours the whole field was completely dug up, but no trace of any treasure was discovered. Shortly after, however, just at the spot where the scaffolding was erected the labourers espied something glittering in the sunlight, and they reported the matter to the Raja, who forthwith proceeded to the spot, and ordered the men to dig deeper and deeper until after an hour's concentrated exertions they came in sight of a lovely throne set with numberless precious stones. And a shout of joy burst forth from the lips of the assembled crowd. The Raja and the ministers of state hastened to the spot and seeing the jewelled throne, their hearts were filled with intense delight. The throne was ordered to be lifted up from the trench with the utmost possible care, but it seemed

to have stuck fast somewhere so firmly that the united efforts of a thousand workmen could not move it an inch in any direction. The Raja thought there must be another mystery at the bottom of this second difficulty, and turned again towards the astrologers for a solution. The astrologers after consulting the stars declared that the throne was not of earthly make and that a sacrifice to the gods was needed to lift it from its place. So a sacrifice of one hundred goats was offered to propitiate the gods, and lo! the next moment the throne came out easily and was set down on the ground before the Raja's face.

The Raja went back to the palace, leaving behind his ministers to bring the throne after him with all possible care. Before sunset the throne arrived at the palace, and it was placed on a spot which had been swept and cleaned for that purpose previously. The labourers were handsomely paid and sent away with suitable rewards. Next morning the throne was washed and polished, and now it looked ten times more handsome. Some of the jewellery work had been damaged during the excavation, and the best jewellers of the metropolis were employed to repair it and to set fresh stones in places where the jewels were missing. In three months' time the inlaying work was finished, and then the throne looked a thing of such surpassing brilliance that no one could gaze at it without having his eyes dazzled by the glow. The Raja was particularly charmed to behold the beauty of the thirty-two jewelled images encircling the throne, all of which were so skilfully made that they appeared to

be endowed with life. The throne was removed to a splendid hall hung with embroidered tapestry and spread over with carpets of rich silk, with a fountain in the centre of the floor, playing in a gold basin supported by a pair of gilded lions, one on each side, like heraldic devices.

The Raja made munificent gifts to the Pundits and astrologers, and suitable cash presents and honours to the ministers and other high officers of the State in commemoration of the fortunate discovery. One year's remission of the land revenue was also granted to the landowners and cultivators in honour of the event. Every one was rewarded according to his rank : in fact, as the ancient Hindu chronicler puts it with a characteristic touch of exaggeration, the bestowal of rewards and honours was so profuse that not a man was left poor throughout the kingdom of Ujjain.

The Court priest was then asked to fix an auspicious date for the king to sit on this new throne, and a certain day in the month of *Kartik* (corresponding to October or November of the English year) was appointed for the ceremony. When the happy day drew near great preparations were set on foot to celebrate the enthronement ceremony with befitting pomp and splendour. Hundreds of flags and banners waved in the air ; hundreds of drums beat to music ; hundreds of singers chanted songs of joy ; and hundreds of priests, bathed and anointed, performed sacred rites in honour of the auspicious event. The Raja got up early, and having dressed himself in robes of the

richest splendour, walked in state through the hall, followed by all his courtiers, to grace the gorgeous ceremony. But the moment he advanced his foot to take his seat on the throne, the thirty-two jewelled images that adorned the throne burst into a loud fit of laughter as though in derision of the Raja's intention. The Raja drew back in surprise and shame, and flung himself into another chair placed near the throne. When he recovered from his surprise and alarm he said to the images, "Why do you laugh like this? What offence did you notice in me? Am I not fit to grace this throne? I have made good laws, framed wise rules and administered even-handed justice to all. My subjects love me and are loyal to me. I have learned the art of governing a State, and am a born prince moreover. The other Rajas of the world hold me in high esteem and pay homage to me. You cannot be pardoned for this daring insult, unless you can offer some satisfactory explanation in defence of your conduct."

The first image named

Ratan Manjari

replied as follows :—

"O Raja Bhoj, you are well versed in every science and art and a patron of learning, but you appear to be possessed of one vice—obstinacy. Granting that you are the greatest monarch of the world, what reason is there of your being so proud? You

are like a little pool of water that swells up with every little increase in its muddy contents, while the great sea remains ever unchanged in the dry and the wet season alike. There are many in the world who are a hundred times better than you, and the worst of it is that you never correctly realise your own position nor feel how poor and degraded a being you are. The owner of this throne was a monarch who had many a king like you among his menials."

Raja Bhoj was terribly enraged at these insolent words, and was on the point of ordering the throne to be broken in pieces, when one of his counsellors, who was standing behind his chair, came forward and humbly begged his majesty not to let go the reins of justice even in the passion of anger, and requested him to hear what the image had to say further. The Raja consented to act upon the minister's advice and ordered the image to proceed with her narration, if she had to say anything further. The image thereupon filled her eyes with tears and continued, "Press me not to recount the past glories of my Raja, as this will only make you appear ridiculous and contemptible in the eyes of the world, and will moreover plunge you in the deepest grief and misery. You have been sufficiently abashed already, but still you do not seem to feel shame. I entreat you not to compel me to speak: my lips had better remain sealed as they were. On the very day our noble Raja left us, his stately throne became a mere wreck, and we, its guardian angels, were turned into lifeless images; nothing worse than this can now happen

to us. We are therefore not afraid of anything now."

The minister asked the image why she wanted to keep her tale untold and prayed to her not to mind the offence that had been unconsciously offered to her, but to go on with her story. The image thereupon began :—

Many centuries ago there was in Ujjain a Brahman Raja, named Shyam Soyamber, who was so famous for his munificence that the world gave him the surname of Dharamsen. He married four wives, one of each of the four Hindu castes,—Brahman, Kshattriya, Vaishya, and Sudra. A year after the marriage his first queen, who was a woman of great beauty, bore him a son. The prince grew up, nourished in the lap of luxury and attended by the softest care and tenderness. Scholars of high fame were appointed tutors for him, and the Raja himself superintended his boy's education. The boy was naturally so intelligent that every branch of knowledge seemed quite easy to him, and his teachers were astonished at the rapid progress he made in his studies. He was also trained in all kinds of manly exercises in which he soon excelled every other prince. By the time he came to be ten years of age he had acquired fair proficiency in many a liberal science and many a useful art. The prince was named Brahmanit, and he was the delight of his father's soul and the pride of his race, being not only heir-apparent to the throne of Ujjain, but already a youth of acknowledged genius in the world of letters.

Three sons were born to the Raja's second queen, and these others were named Shankh, Vikramditya, and Bhärtehari. They too were all well-educated, and were noted for their love of heroic and noble deeds. Kshattriyas as they were, they loved to follow the Kshattriyas' ancestral occupation both by choice and by instinct.

The Raja's fifth son, born of the Vaishya queen, was named Chandra, and he had no particular gifts to distinguish him.

The Sudra queen bore him a son named Dhanontari, who displayed a great taste in natural philosophy and medicine, and ultimately became so great a physician that his name is cherished with reverence even to the present day. He was one of the "wise men" of ancient India.

When the eldest prince grew of age the Raja appointed him as his Prime Minister, and a very capable minister he proved himself to be. But after a few years the Raja, for some unknown reason, became displeased with him, and turned him out of his appointment. Being so harshly treated by his own father the Prince became so disgusted with home that he secretly determined to flee to a distant country to pass the remaining days of his life in voluntary exile. With this end in view he went to Dharapur. Just after his departure his father died, and Shankh, the second son, was crowned king of Ujjain.

The King of Dharapur gave the Prince a warm reception and welcomed him kindly to his court, where he lived for many years. One day he

treacherously murdered his own master, the Raja, and usurped his kingdom. He then came back to Ujjain, but soon after his arrival at home he fell ill and died. He was succeeded in his own kingdom of Dharapur by his step-brother Shankh. After this the Raja's next brother, Vikrmaditya, left home for a pilgrimage and nothing further was heard of him for many years. The suspicion arose in many minds that he had been secretly murdered by his brother Shankh, who during his brother's absence, took upon himself the duty of ruling his State.

One day a number of astrologers approached the Raja and solicited permission to communicate a secret of importance if His Majesty were graciously pleased to listen. On receiving permission they said, "We have consulted our books and we find that Your Majesty's bitterest enemy is at hand, and—." They suddenly stopped short, afraid to speak out the whole. Raja Shankh encouraged them to go on and even then they felt nervous to utter the fatal truth with their lips. However, with much effort they at last broke out, "Our books declare that in a short time Vikrmaditya will proclaim himself king of Ujjain, and make away with his brother."

"Away with you," said the Raja in a tone of the utmost incredulity and impatience, "You have all gone mad; your senses have forsaken you outright; your books are fit to be burnt to ashes. How can this be? Vikrmaditya is, for ought we know, dead and gone. This sort of flattery does not suit my taste."

The astrologers came out of the Raja's room,

and held a consultation among themselves as to what should be done to assure the Raja that what they had told him was not a concoction. However to verify their conclusions once more, they again made elaborate astronomical calculations and obtained the same finding again. "Though the Raja would not believe us," they said to one another, "the fact is undisputed that his deadliest enemy Vikram is at this moment in the very suburbs of the capital. He cannot be far off, and has in fact been hovering about the palace for some time past."

One of the astrologers, to make assurance doubly sure, actually went to the outlying jungles, and found the veritable Vikram worshipping the god Shiva in the thickest part of the forest, where he had built himself a little hut in which he dwelt like a hermit. The astrologer came back and informed his companions that their calculations were correct, that he had verily seen Vikram in the outskirts of the town. "Alas!" they sighed, "our Raja is deaf to our prediction, but the end of this will surely prove unhappy. We must seriously think out what to do. Let us go to the court again and try once more to persuade the king to take our warning. Personally we have nothing to lose from the threatened change of rulers, yet being his old servants we cannot brook to see our Raja falling into danger without giving him a friendly warning."

So saying they went to the royal palace a second time, and quickly gaining admittance they found the Raja disengaged from all business of the State. As

court etiquette enjoined, they pronounced a blessing upon the Raja and took their seats. The Raja asked them rather sarcastically, "Have you invented some other story?"

"No inventions of ours," the Pundits replied, "but the decree of Fate; we warn Your Majesty to keep on your guard, for we emphatically declare that your enemy Vikram is in the neighbouring forest. One of us has actually seen him there, as we have already informed Your Majesty, but you have persistently disbelieved us. Our loyalty prompts us to disclose this secret to you. If you can prove our assertions to be false, we are prepared to suffer the extreme penalty of the law. We repeat that the enemy shall soon be at your gate."

"Come and see me to-morrow morning," ordered the Raja; "to-night I shall devise some means to get rid of Vikram, if your information proves to be correct."

The astrologers returned home, and next day before sunrise they waited at the palace door according to orders. The Raja soon granted them an audience, and without further ceremony he asked the Pundits to lead him to the jungle where they had seen Vikram in hiding. This was soon done, and the Raja discovered that the information given him by the Pundits was really true. He found Vikram in the garb of a devotee, with his body all besmeared with ashes, but still he was easily able to penetrate the disguise, and recognise his long-lost brother. When Shankh approached him, Vikram was engaged in his devotion, making offerings

of flowers and water to a clay image of Shiva, and when he finished his worship he went into his cottage which was close by. Just as Vikram turned his back, Shankh took the opportunity to defile the holy image by shedding a few drops of wine upon it. The Pundits were horrified to see this act of impiety committed by the Raja, and felt convinced that his end was indeed nigh. But still they felt it to be their duty to counsel the king once more. So they told the Raja to pray to Shiva for forgiveness of his offence. But as the old proverb says, those whom the gods wish to ruin first lose their wits, the Pundits' friendly advice merely served to excite his wrath, and he exclaimed, "I have detected your perfidy. Do you want to feed me on false hopes? Whatever is written in the book of fate cannot be effaced by anyone. But what wrong have I done? This lump of clay is nothing but a handful of moistened dust; it possesses no supernatural power, and it can bear no relation whatever to the Almighty. You, Pundits, have laid a cunning trap to ensnare the world: you are like a fowler who conceals himself behind a screen in order to catch birds. There is an old saying that false hope and fear are equally to be avoided. Let me tell you that your fear is based merely on superstition."

With these words the Raja drew seven straight lines on the ground, and scattering a handful of dust upon them murmured some magic words of incantation, and went back to his palace. These lines had the virtue of turning mad anyone who might happen to step across. The Raja also took a second magic

safeguard, which was this. He placed a cucumber in his hand, and taking a knife in the other, pronounced some spell over it, and it was believed that whosoever might cut that cucumber was destined to be himself cut down by the hand of an assassin.

Having come back to the palace, the Raja sent two or three of his high officers to conduct Vikram to his house. The officers knew that the Raja's design was to put his brother to death by secrecy and treachery, but they had no alternative except to obey. For they knew that if they took compassion on him and revealed the secret to him, they were sure to be hanged or perhaps treated in a worse way still. They went to the forest, and making a low bow before Vikram said, "We have been sent here by our Raja Shankh, to bid you welcome to the palace, as this jungle is not a fit dwelling for a king. Our master is very sorry that you did not inform him of your arrival earlier, otherwise he would himself have come here to see his long-separated brother. Our Raja is waiting impatiently to see you."

Vikram smiled, and without further colloquy started for Ujjain. Though clothed in the garb of a begging monk, he was really a man of culture and learning; he knew every art and science, including necromancy, and he could therefore easily detect those fatal lines drawn in front of his cottage door, and avoiding them he reached the king's residence in safety. Seeing his first scheme fail, Raja Shankh turned pale with terror, and with a show of the deepest love and affection, stepped down from the

throne to meet and greet his brother. He made Vikram sit down on the throne beside himself, and put him many questions relating to his long wanderings, which Vikram answered with becoming brevity. Then the Raja gave him a knife and a cucumber, and told him to cut the latter into slices as he wanted to partake of the fruit in the company of his dear brother from whom he had been separated for a long time. Vikram penetrated his brother's secret motives by the aid of his astronomical speculations, but speaking no word he took the knife and the cucumber in his hand with his eyes looking downward on the ground. Just at this moment the Raja turned his face towards the minister to tell him something, and this favourable opportunity was at once seized by Vikram, and quick as thought, he stabbed the Raja with that knife, and pushed his bleeding corpse down from the throne.

A thrill of horror ran through the city at the news of the Raja's assassination. But Vikram allayed the panic by tactfully ordering a splendid funeral to the remains of the deceased Raja and by allowing his widowed queen to burn herself on the same pile with her dead husband. Next morning Vikram dressed himself in royal robes and celebrated his accession to the throne with much pomp and splendour so as to impress upon the minds of the people the belief that he was a mighty king. The ministers and other high officers of the State presented the customary offerings on the occasion, and in return received robes of honour and grants of land in recognition of the

various services they had rendered to the State, each officer being at the same time confirmed in his appointment. The people were struck with admiration to see these first acts of their new sovereign, and hoped that he would soon announce some reforms in the administration, for the fact was that they had not been very happy under the rule of their late king. Their hopes were not deferred. For the very next morning the new king held a public *Durbar*, at which he announced various reforms calculated to rid the country of those abuses under which it had groaned for many years. He wrought a wholesale change in the system of administration and framed many good laws for the well-being of his people. The strictest justice was dispensed to high and low alike; partiality, favouritism, and jobbery were killed at one blow. This made the new king exceedingly popular with all classes of men, for equality in the eyes of the law is appreciated by the educated and the uneducated alike. His urbanity and suavity of manners made him likewise an idol of his subjects. In short, Vikrmaditya proved himself such a capable ruler that he was cheerfully acknowledged as the rightful king by all the people of Ujjain."

Having given the history of Vikrmaditya so far, the image proceeded to tell a story about his reign. "One day Raja Vikrmaditya, who by the way was a famous archer, went out a-hunting with a party of friends and attendants. As they were riding through the jungle, a deer

suddenly sprang up in front of them and bounded away through the glades. The Raja immediately gave chase to the animal and was followed by his attendants at full gallop, but the animal ran so swiftly that no one could overtake it, and at length it vanished into the depth of the forest. The Raja however continued to gallop in pursuit of the game all day, and drew rein only when the shades of evening were gathering fast around him. He looked about himself for a moment, and saw no one at hand ; his companions had been left far behind ; his horse was panting pitifully for rest. He therefore dismounted and wished to enjoy the fresh coolness of the woods which seemed to be inviting him to take a brief rest. For a long time he strolled about among the shady trees, guiding his steps wherever his fancy led them.

By and by it began to grow dark, and he thought it was time for him to hasten back to his palace. But it had grown so dark already that he dared not make any attempt to find his way back. So he climbed up to the top of a huge tree and began to look around himself. In the dim distance he espied a beautiful city gleaming in the light of a thousand lamps. The Raja wondered what city it could be and felt a great longing to visit it, and, if possible, to conquer it and annex it to his dominions. He made a vow to himself that if he ever got back to his capital in safety he would make war upon the ruler of that city and make it part of his territories.

Just as these thoughts were floating in the Raja's mind, the excrement of a raven suddenly dropped on

his face. The Raja, highly enraged, aimed a shot at the audacious bird, but the darkness of the night made him miss his mark.

Meanwhile the Raja's attendants, losing sight of him, began to wander hither and thither in search of him, and after a long and tiresome search they at last came upon the spot where the Raja was sitting sheltered on the tree; and under their escort, the Raja went back to his capital in safety. The next morning he ordered his minister to summon all the fowlers of the realm and to order them to catch as many ravens as they could get hold of. The King's commands were promptly obeyed, and in a few months' time millions of ravens were entrapped and brought to the King's presence and enclosed in an enormous cage.

At last the fowlers reported that all the ravens to be found anywhere within the kingdom had been brought together, and that not a single one was allowed to escape unsnared. The Raja then betook himself to the flock of ravens, and said, "Which one of you was it that had discharged excrement upon my face on such and such a day? If the offender does not confess his guilt, I have it in my power to exterminate the whole race of ravens."

The ravens held a consultation among themselves, and then their spokesman on behalf of the whole assembly denied the charge brought against them, pleading 'Not guilty' in the most unequivocal terms. "Then who has done this deed?" demanded the Raja in an incredulous voice; "not a raven is left

upon the face of the country.—surely you are telling a lie." One of the ravens then spoke out, "Some two or three miles away from this place there lives a Raja named Bahubal, who has a clever minister named Lutbaran. This man knows the trick of changing his form into the shape of any sort of bird or beast he likes. But generally he assumes the form of a raven and flies hither and thither over the kingdom of his master. He it must be who has discharged excrement upon your face." The Raja ordered Lutbaran to be brought to his presence, failing which he swore he would stamp out the species of ravens from the face of the earth.

Then the ravens begged the Raja to allow one of them to go out of the cage and fetch him, and this was granted. The freed raven thereupon flew away and in a very short time reached Lutbaran's house. Seeing him Lutbaran asked, "Why are you in such breathless hurry? Why do you look so ruffled? What is the matter with you?" The raven replied, "I have come to ask a favour of you, but will not tell you what it is until you promise to grant it. On Lutbaran's replying that he could refuse nothing that was just and reasonable, the raven related the whole story of the captivity without omitting a single detail, and warned him of the terrible fate which was hanging over their tribe. He entreated Lutbaran to help him at this hazardous juncture, as the Raja had threatened to destroy the whole race of ravens if the guilt remained unconfessed. "Then what do you want me to do?" asked Lutbaran. "Save our lives," replied the

raven; "we told the Raja that Lutbaran, the prime minister of King Bahubal, was sometimes in the habit of assuming the form of a raven and flying through the air, and that it might be he that had discharged excrement upon the Raja's face. Under this plea I was allowed leave to come here, and here I am to persuade you to start for Ujjain without delay, for the Raja wants to see you personally. If you defer your departure, the blood of a million innocent souls will rest upon your head."

Lutbaran said, "To tell the truth, it was I that had discharged excrement upon the Raja's face; but before I start for Ujjain I must obtain permission from my own Raja. I shall not be away long, and you may keep waiting here for a few minutes." Lutbaran went to his master and asked for one day's leave of absence, which was readily granted, and coming back to where the raven was waiting for him, the two set out together for Ujjain.

When Lutbaran reached the gate of Raja Vikramaditya's palace, he threw off his raven's disguise, and assumed the form of a man, and requested the sentinel on duty to announce to his master that Lutbaran was waiting at the door in obedience to the royal summons. The porter went to the Raja and inquired if His Majesty would be pleased to grant an audience to Lutbaran who awaited His Majesty's pleasure at the gate. The Raja ordered him to be admitted at once, and when he was ushered into the King's audience-chamber, the Raja stood up from his seat and received him with open arms and made him sit down on the

throne by his side. When the exchange of civilities was over, Lutbaran asked the Raja for what offence he had confined all the ravens of his kingdom, and in reply the Raja gave him a full account of what had taken place.

Lutbaran then confessed, "Sire, it was I that had discharged excrement upon your face, and I had done so to punish you for your wicked intention of conquering the capital city of my just and benevolent King. My heart was filled with a sudden rage at the thought of the unprovoked attack that you contemplated, and in the heat of the moment I forgot myself. I now beseech you to pardon me for my folly. O Raja, I have seen many more years than you, and you will readily forgive an old man's presumption if he tells you not to become proud. You should always think that every one else is superior to you, and if you bear this in mind constantly all men will be pleased with you."

"Why should I not be proud?" returned the Raja; "I am a brave and powerful King, and have every reason to feel proud of my position. How is it that this strange thought ever came into your head?"

Lutbaran smiled and said, "Even in saying what you have just uttered you are forgetting my advice. It is a great pity that you harbour a secret wish to conquer the territories of Raja Bahubal, whom your father Gandharpsen served as a minister for many years, until incapacitated by the infirmities of age he was obliged to retire from service. He then set himself up as an independent Raja by purchasing

extensive landed estates with the fortune he had amassed during his long tenure of office, and his people gave him the name of Shyam Soyambar. He subsequently made large additions to his estates, and being a generous and kindly lord to his people, he soon won for himself the honorable name of Dharamsen, and was acknowledged as a King by my master, and consequently by other neighbouring princes. You too cannot be a Raja unless my master recognises your title."

Vikrmaditya replied, "I am very sorry I did not know your master so long, although our territories border upon each other and we should be therefore friendly neighbours. I am sorry I never even sought his acquaintance. Now I am anxious to court his alliance, and I hope that through your kind intervention I shall soon gain the object of my heart. Lutbaran answered, "I have always been a well-wisher of your family, and I will serve you faithfully. There is however one thing to be settled beforehand,—but you must pardon the liberty of my speech, considering that I was accustomed to speak in an unrestrained manner to your father also." "When you were my father's friend," said the Raja, "you are a privileged person, and you may say whatever you like."

"If you really wish to see my master," said Lutbaran, "you had better start to-morrow morning for his capital, which is not far off. I am going away at once, and shall inform my master beforehand of your expected arrival, and shall wait for you at the gate."

The Raja accepted this arrangement, and at the intercession of Lutbaran ordered the release of all

the ravens shut up in the cage. Lutbaran reached his master's court in a very few minutes on his raven wings, and entering the Raja's presence made due obeisance to the throne. The Raja, seeing him evidently returning from a journey, asked him where he had been, and Lutbaran replied, "I had been to see Raja Vikramaditya, the son of Gandharpsen, who, as you may remember, served you as minister for many years, and rendered valuable services during his long tenure of office. His son will be here to-morrow to pay his respects to you."

Next day early in the morning Vikramaditya, well-armed and mounted on a swift horse, started for the capital of King Bahubal, attended by a trusty officer of the court. The fleet courser galloped briskly on, and by noonday the King's destination was reached. He was first received by Lutbaran at the city gate in right royal style, and then courteously conducted to the Raja's presence. In introducing him to his master, Lutbaran spoke in terms of the highest praise of Vikramaditya, and of his justice, bravery, and generosity. Bahubal received him with every mark of honour and made him take his seat by his side. He was put up in a stately palace, and Lutbaran assiduously waited upon him night and day, ministering to his wants and comforts. At night the palace was lighted with such a blaze of light as turned the night into day.

After staying for four or five days Raja Vikramaditya told Lutbaran that it was time for him to take leave of his kind host, for he said he must go back to

Ujjain where he feared everything might not be working satisfactorily in his absence. "Well, ask the Raja for the jewelled throne," said Lutbaran, "and when you will sit on it, nobody will ever dare to stand against you in a fight; you will become invincible, and be regarded as the mightiest monarch of the world." "What is in this jewelled throne of yours?" asked Vikrmaditya. Lutbaran replied, "Well, this jewelled throne formerly belonged to the god Shiva, who being pleased with Raja Indra, presented it to him. Ten years ago my Raja had an occasion to visit Indra, who gave away the throne to Bahubal as a gift in token of his affection for him."

Lutbaran then reported to his master that Vikrmaditya was asking for leave to go back to his home, and Bahubal granted him a farewell audience at which the latter received his *tilak*—a streak of holy paint on the forehead of a ruling prince, which is a Hindu emblem of royalty. He also made him a present of the jewelled throne for which he had made a solicitation at the suggestion of Lutbaran. Bahubal accompanied him as far as the castle gate to see his guest off, and after mutual embraces and other customary forms of leave-taking, he proceeded on his journey. Conveyances had been arranged by Lutbaran beforehand, and the Raja travelled safely and comfortably.

Raja Vikrmaditya was quite happy to come back home. By virtue of his possession of the jewelled throne he became such a powerful monarch that his sway extended over the whole country and he

became famous as a most just and benevolent ruler both at home and abroad."

The image continued, "Raja Vikramaditya's crowning measure was to institute a new era, called the *Samvat*, which is still the current era among the Hindus of Northern India. He made large gifts to the poor, and he had a great love for the sacred books of his religion, which used to be read out to him by Brahman reciters for stated seasons in the year."

The image then added, "This is all that I have to say regarding Vikramaditya. About his brothers I have nothing to say. You have, I hope, come to know by this time how this jewelled throne came into the hands of Raja Vikramaditya; and you must also clearly understand that you are not fit to sit on this throne, whether you believe me or not, for your lips are full of mealy-mouthed courtesies."

Raja Bhoj made reply, "I shall see to-morrow how you can keep me back from sitting on this throne."

The image rejoined, "You are called learned and wise, but your acts belie your reputation."

When the first image had finished her account, one of the King's courtiers begged the Raja to give a chance to the other images to tell their tales one after another. The Raja was burning with wrath at the concluding portion of the remarks, which were a direct insult to him, but he did not pause to reply and went back to his chamber. He was also burning with fond desire to take his seat on the jewelled throne that he had come by through a happy turn of fortune, and so, torn by conflicting passions, he was

denied even a moment's rest all that night. When at last the day dawned, the Raja got up from his bed, took his bath, put on his dress, and went to the throne room with his courtiers. But as soon as he tried to set his foot on the throne, the second image named

Chitra Rekha

cried out :—

“Stand aloof, O Raja, stand aloof from the throne. I know that your heart is burning with the desire of sitting on this throne, but yet I warn you beforehand, so that you may not have to repent afterwards if it turns out ill with you. Mend your ways, I pray you, for your habits need chastisement.”

“Chastisement?” thundered the Raja; “cease prating in that way; mind thy own business without fingering into the private character of other people. Counsel unsought is counsel unheeded.”

The image meekly answered, “Nevertheless I shall try my best to keep you back from sitting on this throne, by telling you of some golden deeds performed by Raja Vikrmaditya, in the hope that by listening to these you may be induced to give up your foolish ways and seek wisdom therefrom.”

The Raja flushed red with anger, but perceiving there was no other course open to him, he hung down his head and began to extinguish the fire of his wrath with the waters of patience and hope. The

image therefore continued with her admonition : " You are not at all worthy of this jewelled throne, and it is a folly to attempt a comparison between you and Vikrmaditya."

At these reproachful words the subsiding fire of the Raja's anger blazed forth afresh, but he checked himself and answered politely, " What boots it to indulge in all this rigmarole ? Reserve your admonitions for a better occasion, and proceed to tell me the story of your Raja that you promised. Be as brief as you can, for I have no patience to listen to a long-winded tale."

The image then began : " Shortly after coming to the throne, Vikrmaditya resolved to go back to his hermit's life in the pathless forest, where he might practise penance and devotion undisturbed by the turmoils of court life. His heart which had tasted the bliss of solitude grew sick of the din and clamour that besets an oriental throne, and he longed to return to the enjoyment of that peace which passeth understanding. One day he imparted his wish to his ministers and requested them to form a Council of Regency during his absence, for he had made up his mind to lead a private life for a few years. No one of the ministers approved the idea of his departure. But the King's heart was set on going, and finding his officers of State opposed to his wish, he secretly sent for his younger brother, Bhartehari, and made him regent during his absence, and placed him at the head of the affairs of the empire ; and then putting on the rusty brown garment

of a hermit he left the palace and went into the forest alone. Bhartehari was a dutiful brother: he was not at all pleased at the King's departure; but he felt it to be his duty to obey the royal command.

Now there lived in Ujjain a Brahman who was miserably poor, having to support a large family with no one to help him in his struggles with poverty and want. Tired of a householder's life he resolved to dedicate the remainder of his days to the worship of the god Shiva in a distant forest, and to leave his family to their fate. So one dark night he stole away from the house, and settling in a forest, began to worship Shiva. He had unbounded faith in this god, whom he trusted even to satisfy the pangs of hunger and thirst.

When many years had rolled by, Shiva one day appeared in person before the Brahman, and holding a nice fruit in his hand, offered it to him saying, 'I present this fruit of immortality to you', and disappeared. The Brahman's heart was puffed up with joy, and he now thought of going back to his wife and children. They, poor creatures, had suffered all manner of privations during the Brahman's absence, but had somehow managed to drag on a precarious existence in the hope that after all the Brahman might be earning a living for himself and his family, and might be on the point of returning home laden with riches. When at last, after years of hoping and waiting, the Brahman did in truth seem to coming, his children ran forward to welcome him, and the Brahman was so greatly moved to see

them, that his eyes streamed with tears as he clasped them to his bosom one after another. When the transports of this unexpected return were over, the wife asked, "Have you brought anything for these children of yours? They have not had any food for the last three days." The Brahman answered, "I have not been serving the King, but the god Shiva, and I am therefore as penniless now as ever. This fruit", said he, giving to her what the god had presented him, "has been granted to me by the god Shiva, whom I worshipped continuously for many years: it is the fruit of immortality, and whosoever tastes of it will become immortal."

At this the wife burst forth into a flood of tears and sobbed heavily. Her husband rebuked her and said, "I am amazed to see you grieving at what I thought would gladden your heart." But the wife explained, "We have nothing in the house to eat, and besides that, the country is in the grip of a famine, and we cannot find any means to earn our daily bread. If we become immortal, all we gain thereby is to suffer starvation till eternity. This fruit will only prolong our sorrows to the end of time. If we die that is the only way to escape from this misery. All night I keep tossing on my restless bed, agonised by cares, pinched by hunger and thirst, drooping and desponding as to what will become of us and our children, who will all die of starvation at no distant date, if this state of things should unhappily continue. What is the good of becoming immortal then for a poor man like you?"

"Then what shall we do with this fruit?" said the Brahman sorrowfully.

"Better take it to the Raja," she replied, "and ask him for some money in exchange. But pray, do not tarry long, as we are already dying of starvation."

The Brahman immediately rose up and started for the King's court, and quickly reaching the gate begged the sentinel on duty to inform the Raja about the arrival of a learned Pundit with a nice fruit which he wanted to present to His Majesty. He was instantly admitted by the Raja's order, and going in, he blessed the Raja and presented that fruit to him saying 'Mighty King, be pleased to accept this fruit of immortality which has been given to me by the god Shiva. I shall be happy by your living a long life, and as for myself, I shall be contented with a handful of gold that you may bestow upon me in return for this offering, for the truth is that there is not a morsel of food in my house. This fruit is of no use to me.' The Raja gave the Brahman a lakh of rupees and allowed him to take leave.

Now the Raja had a wife whom he loved more than anything else in the world, and his greatest happiness consisted in surrounding her with all manner of luxuries and splendours. He went into the female apartments and handing the fruit to his queen, explained its virtue to her, and said, "I have purchased this fruit at heavy cost from a Brahman: and I give it to you; now be immortal and for ever young. But take care that it may not be lost, for

I value it more than all my treasures." The queen took the fruit, and the Raja left the harem well pleased.

Now the Raja's queen was carrying on a love intrigue with the commandant of the royal police force, and she gave away her husband's present to her paramour. But it so happened that this officer had kept a concubine, and he in his turn presented that fruit to her and unfolded its virtue. This woman, on getting the fruit, thought it to be a fit present for the King, and she accordingly went to the court, and presenting the fruit to the Raja said, "This fruit of immortality has come into my possession by an accident, and I pray that Your Majesty may be pleased to accept it as an offering from a humble woman." The Raja rewarded her with a lakh of rupees, but looking at the fruit carefully, he found it was the same he had given to his queen, and his heart sank within him as he thought of the ingratitude and unfaithfulness of her he loved above everything else. In this state of deep dejection he said to himself, "There can be no question that my wife has proved unfaithful to me: her whole conduct is such that I do not want to see her face again; but that I may not condemn her unheard, I shall hear what she has got to say in her defence. Wealth and pleasure, far from being sources of good, are merely fountain-heads of evil, for by means of them we are insensibly led into paths of sin. Better, far better, to serve God than to serve gold."

With this resolution he went into the female apartments again, and asked the queen what she had

done with the fruit he had given her. She replied that she had eaten it. Then the Raja showed the fruit to her to prove her lie. The queen was nonplussed, and stood aghast, unable to give any reply. The Raja forgave her, ate the fruit himself, and renouncing his throne he left his capital and went out into the jungle to pass his days as a hermit.

The kingdom of Ujjain was now without a ruler, as both Vikrmaditya and Bhartehari had turned hermits, and there was no other member of the royal family who could take charge of affairs. So Indra, king of the heavens, sent down a demon to guard the city until a properly constituted government could be formed. The news of this demoniacal government spread abroad from country to country, until it reached the ears of Vikrmaditya in the forest, and then Vikrmaditya hearing of his country's distress, hastened back to Ujjain. It was the witching hour of midnight when he arrived at the city gate and the reception that awaited him there was the fiendish cry of the demon, "Who art thou, and where art thou going? Halt, and give thy name!" "I am Raja Vikrmaditya", replied the wanderer, "and I am going into my own city. Who art thou to stop me?" The demon replied that he had been sent by the god Indra to guard the city and that if the stranger were Raja Vikrmaditya indeed, he must first wrestle with the demon and then enter the city. The Raja accepted the demon's challenge, and the two began to wrestle, until at last the demon was overpowered and thrown down on the ground.

" You have thrown me down and I will therefore spare your life", said the demon.

The Raja laughed and asked, " To whom are you showing this mercy ? "

The demon then proceeded to explain matters by saying, " I will tell you a secret by which you can escape from the death that is awaiting you, and then you shall rule over the whole of India in peace. Yourself, an oilman, and a potter, these three were born at one and the same instant. Of these three, the potter's devotions proved most acceptable to his deity, and with the assistance of his god he has killed the oilman and changed him into an evil spirit in a cemetry. There he has kept him suspended from a tree, head-downwards, and is now devising a plan to make an end of you also. He will invite you one night to witness his religious ceremonies, and will ask you to prostrate yourself before his god ; but you must say that you do not know how to do it and ask him in turn to show it to you by actual demonstration. The moment he bends down his head, take care to cut it off with one sweep of your sword, and then throw his corpse into a cauldron of boiling oil. Be careful to follow every letter of this instruction."

So saying the demon vanished into air, leaving the Raja in the midst of his perplexities. When he recovered himself after a little while, he rose up and went into his palace. Next morning he re-assumed the reins of sovereignty and gave orders for a full durbar. All the officers of State, of high and low degree, came and presented their vassal dues. In

the town the citizens held various demonstrations in token of their rejoicing. The sounds of music came forth from every house, and Raja Vikrmaditya reascended his glorious throne amidst universal joy.

It so happened one day that a devotee named Shonsbhut came into the Raja's court, and having blessed him presented a fruit and after half an hour mysteriously disappeared. After his departure a suspicion arose in the Raja's mind that the seeming devotee might be the same person against whom Indra's demon had warned him. So he did not eat the fruit himself, but giving it to his chamberlain ordered it to be kept in safe custody. Next day the same devotee came again, and again presented a like fruit to the Raja, and he continued to come in the same manner every day and to give the Raja a fruit each time. One fine evening the Raja had gone to have a stroll in the garden in the company of a band of attendants and favourites, and the devotee found his way inside the garden and as usual presented a fruit to the Raja with many a word of blessing. The Raja began to toss it in the air, when by chance it fell from his hand and broke to pieces, and a brilliant ruby came out from within the centre of the fruit. The Raja was amused to see this, and turning to the devotee he said, "Why have you given me this fruit containing a ruby of high value in it? What is the object you wish to gain from this? Tell me if you have any boon to solicit, and I shall be pleased to help you." The devotee replied, "There

is a jewel in each of the fruits. You have apparently misconstrued my motives in presenting these to you. I have a boon to crave, but I cannot tell it so publicly."

But the Raja first desired to assure himself that the devotee was practising no deception upon him. So turning to the chamberlain he ordered him to bring all the fruits that had been entrusted to his keeping. The fruits were brought and cut, and lo! a rich ruby was actually found in each of them. The Raja was naturally very much gratified to find himself in possession of so many rubies at once. He got the expert jewellers of the city to examine the rubies and appraise their value, and the Raja's joy knew no bounds when they declared that they were unable to estimate the worth of such priceless jewels, as they had never seen the like of them before. The Raja was now satisfied with the devotee's honesty of purpose, and taking him aside, he said, "My whole kingdom is not equal in value to the price of even one of these rubies, and I feel myself overwhelmed by the kindness with which you have heaped upon me these costly gifts which I can never adequately acknowledge. I shall deem myself very fortunate if in return I can render you some service which I solemnly promise to discharge faithfully." The devotee replied, "I intend to perform some special devotions on the bank of the river one night, and the only favour I would ask of you is that you should take the trouble to accompany me alone and watch the function, and for this act of grace I shall ever remain indebted to you." The Raja expressed

his willingness to meet the wishes of the devotee, and asked him to appoint a time when he should go to the river bank to witness his devotions. The devotee named one night in the dark fortnight of the month of Bhadon (corresponding to August-September), and left the royal presence.

When the appointed day arrived the Raja put on a coat of mail under his clothes and started for the river bank. The darkness of the night was terrible, and the rain poured down with such violence that it seemed as though the heavens were going to empty out their accumulated store of waters. The devotee was there at the appointed place already, and seeing the Raja he welcomed him and made him sit down by his side. The Raja beheld all around him a troop of ghosts and evil spirits who had assumed appalling shapes in the pitchy darkness, and were dancing, and making wild uproar, while the devotee, seated in their midst, was playing upon two skulls as though they were musical instruments. The Raja was not at all frightened to see this dreadful spectacle, and turning to the devotee he asked him the part he had to play in the scene. The devotee told him to go and prostrate himself before the goddess that stood yonder, saying that such an act would give him undisputed sway over the whole world. The Raja then recollect ed the warning of the demon and answered with the utmost humility, "Sir, far be it from me to decline to do your holy bidding, but being a novice I do not know how to perform the prostration ceremony. Pray do me the favour of instructing me, and then

I shall doubtless be able to do what you wish." As soon as the devotee bent down his head in reverence before the goddess, the Raja gave a sharp blow on his neck with his sword and severed the head from the body in a second.

Seeing the Raja's dauntless bearing and unflinching presence of mind, the gods rained down flowers from heaven as a sign of their divine approval. But there was one thing more to be done, and the Raja recollecting it, threw the devotee's dead body into the cauldron of boiling oil that was at hand, and thus made an end of him. Immediately after, however, two demons stood forth before the Raja and said, "Let us know your high behests, and we shall carry them out by land or sea, through earth or water." The Raja took an oath of allegiance from the two demons and bound them, by the strictest vows, to serve him whenever he should be pleased to summon them.

Thus ended the tale of the second image who concluded her narration with the same disparaging comparison between Raja Bhoj and Vikrmaditya : "The fortitude and courage of my Raja is simply incomparable, and not even in seven successive births can you hope to equal him."

These insolent words angered the Raja, but he said nothing, and quietly went back to his chamber. But the thought of the jewelled throne sat heavily upon the Raja's mind, and gave him no rest by day or night. So next morning he again went to the throne room to make another attempt to sit upon

the lovely throne. But as soon as he intended to put his foot on it, the third image named

Ratikama

laughed out and said, "What a queer man you are! When two of us have already told you that you are nothing in comparison to Raja Vikrmaditya, why do you insist on claiming an equality? Your obstinacy is rather commendable in point of firmness, but it lacks grace in a sovereign."

The Raja was highly inflamed to hear this, and said, "To laugh out of season is worse than to weep. If I only make up my mind firmly to sit on this throne no difficulty whatever can stand in my way. Now tell me, what notable deeds has your Raja done?"

The image duly replied, "His daily doings will outweigh your heroic achievements. A firefly must not be compared with the sun!"

"Hold your tongue or you will dearly rue your flippancy," replied the Raja angrily.

The image meekly said, "Do not be in wrath, but hear my tale. One day Raja Vikrmaditya was sitting in his palace in the company of a group of young and beautiful damsels. The palace was surrounded by a garden laid out with exquisite taste on the banks of the river Godavari, and here the Raja used to come in the evening to while away his time. The ladies were playing on various musical instruments and the air resounded alternately with notes of melody and

bursts of applause, and the Raja was engrossed in the pleasures of their company when suddenly he noticed a Brahman with his wife and child jumping into the river in order to end their lives and thus to escape from the continual domestic broils which had embittered their existence beyond endurance. He was soon seen struggling against the force of the current. At last quite exhausted he gave himself up for lost. Once only did he lift up his head above the water and cry for help. His cry was accidentally heard by the Raja, who was greatly moved to hear it and called the soldiers on duty at the gate to enquire what that piteous cry was. The next moment that cry was heard again, and the Raja, unable to check the impulse of pity, immediately plunged into the river himself and swam to where the helpless Brahman and his family were drowning. Seeing a rescuer the drowning wretches caught hold of him so fast that the Raja too was drowning. Just at this moment Vikramaditya remembered his two demons and summoned them to his aid, and they quickly brought the party to the shore in safety. The Raja took the unfortunate man and his family to his palace and gave them new clothes and presents of money. When they recovered from their shock the Raja asked them, "Why, you jumped into the river intentionally to commit suicide: why did you then appeal for help?" The grateful Brahman gave a full account of his family quarrels, and then in the most touching words expressed his gratitude to his saviour, who had bestowed upon him both life and property. "My

life," he said, "had become a burden to me, and if I had held it dear I was certainly unconscious of the fact. In a fit of despair I plunged myself into the river and then finding the approach of death a terrible experience I cried aloud for help. But yet I am quite willing to part with my life whenever it may be of service to any man." "My escape too," said the Raja, "was providential. I have to feel grateful to the same Unseen Power which has saved your life."

Thus ended the tale of the third image who, in concluding her narration said, "O Raja, it is honour enough for you to be accounted second to Vikrmaditya."

Bhoj, who thought this to be a mere dodge on the part of the image to prevent him from sitting on the throne, replied, "Although I have been thrice outwitted, I tell you that such nonsense shall not keep me back from sitting on this throne to-morrow," and with these words he withdrew into the palace.

Chandra Kala

the fourth image, seeing Raja Bhoj next morning, burst into tears and said, "My lord, I know too well that you are seized with a strong desire to take your seat on this throne, but I advise you to eradicate this noxious weed from your heart." The Raja replied, "I am tenderly affected towards this lovely throne, otherwise I should have ordered it to be burned to ashes."

The image answered, "Suppress your rage a while, and listen to my story. One evening Vikramaditya was sitting in the public audience chamber and listening to appeals and petitions from his subjects. That day there happened to be light work, and the Raja was about to rise when suddenly a Pundit came in and begged him to hear his prayer. The Raja resumed his seat wondering what this fellow had to say. At last the Brahman spoke, "I have heard that Your Majesty has great taste in astronomy, and this has attracted me to your court from a distant country. I have devoted my life to the study and practice of this science, and I humbly solicit that Your Majesty may be pleased to give a trial to my skill by asking me to fix an auspicious day for laying the foundations of a new palace by residing in which you might obtain all your wishes. My sole aim in saying this is to promote your greatness and glory." The Raja cheerfully assented to the Brahman's proposal, and ordered him to fix an auspicious day as requested.

Next morning the Brahman reported to the Raja, "To-day is the best day in the whole year to lay the foundations of a new palace." The Raja, with the impatience of an oriental monarch, immediately ordered the royal engineer to erect as speedily as possible an elegant palace of the finest design and workmanship, and to lay the foundations of the building forthwith. The palace took three years to build, and when it was completed the Raja went to inspect it, and he was greatly struck with the beautiful

design and masterly execution of the noble edifice. Around it were beautiful lawns dotted with plants bearing fragrant flowers, so that on whatever side a man turned his face his senses were regaled with the richest perfume. The building stood facing the river, and this greatly enhanced the beauty of the view, and to crown all, it was most tastefully furnished and decorated.

A greedy Brahman happened to be passing by that way; he gazed upon the palace with admiration for some time, and the temptation to possess it became so strong that he felt no shame in begging it of the Raja as a free gift. Now notice the absurdity of such a request. But the Raja, without even a moment's pause, said, "I hereby grant it to you as a free gift to be used by you in whatever manner you shall deem fit." The Brahman's face beamed with delight at this unexpected turn of good fortune, and he lost no time in going to his house and bringing his family to take up their abode in that handsome palace.

At night, when the Brahman was asleep, Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth, arrived at the gate and cried out, "Let me enter. I am a goddess—I say it upon my honour, and you may bind me down to any promises you like." The woman's cries roused the Brahman from his sleep. A cold terror seized his heart and his whole body streamed with perspiration. He covered up his face, and was struck dumb with terror. The cries gradually died down and the Brahman's fears too slowly subsided. He tried to go to

sleep again, thinking the disturbance to have been but an idle dream, when suddenly, to his horror, the same voice was heard again. The Brahman trembled at the sound, and tossed to and fro on his bed, afraid to close his eyes for a single moment, and inwardly cursing himself for his folly in coming to live in such a magnificent palace. In short the hours of the night seemed to him to be an age of agony.

As soon as the morning broke, the Brahman went to the court, and giving the Raja his blessings took his seat. The Raja seeing his wild looks and excited behaviour, remarked, "Your faded face surprises me: how did you enjoy the night in your new place?" The Brahman replied, "A house haunted by a ghost is fit for ghosts alone: I shall have none of it. I prefer a thatched cottage to such a palace. I do not even want to see it, as it will remind me again of the terrors of last night." He then briefly described his experiences, and renounced his right of ownership which he surrendered back to the Raja. Vikrmaditya tried to explain to him that the woman whose cries he had heard was not a ghost, but the goddess Lakshmi. "Whoever she might be," urged the Brahman, "I do not want to go there again. Pray take back your gift and spare my life." The Raja replied, "I do not press you to do anything against your inclination," and he bestowed on the Brahman as many lakhs of rupees in cash as he had expended in the building of that palace, and thus richly recompensed he sent him back to his house.

When her tale ended, the image turned to Raja Bhoj and said, "You see how Vikrmaditya was a very type of generosity, and I trust you perceive now the difference between yourself and him." Bhoj made no answer, and sullenly left the throne-room.

Next morning, when Bhoj came again to the throne room, he was accosted by the fifth image named

Lilawati

who said to him, "Are you still contemplating to take your seat on this jewelled throne?" "Yes, why not?" replied the Raja curtly; "but I am quite mystified and enraged at your strange behaviour." The image said, "Do not try to blacken the good name of my Raja. I know well that our tales do but kindle your curiosity and arouse a moment's idle interest in your listless and apathetic mind; nevertheless it is my duty to recount the glorious exploits of my Raja." King Bhoj replied, "Your tales only serve to add to my bewilderment. I know they are all mere fables, but yet they continue to fascinate me, told as they are with such remarkable eloquence." The image rejoined, "Our object in telling these tales is to work a wholesome reform in your character by spurring you to healthy emulation; and the worst of your vices seems to be a rage that is continually getting the better of your judgment." "Sing the glories of your own Raja without picking

holes into the character of any one else" replied the Raja in wrath; "I have no time to listen to your fooleries." The image said, "Thank God that you have at least been awakened to a consciousness of your wicked past, and consented to listen to the glories of Vikrmaditya. Well then, listen. One day two men engaged, in a friendly dispute about fate and strength. The first man held that a strong man could conquer the world, whereas the second was of opinion that fate alone was all-powerful, since its decrees could not be gainsaid or upset by any authority however powerful. The first man insisted that human strength was of greater force than fate itself, and the second with equal insistence held the opposite view. The second man tried every means to persuade his opponent to come round to his view, saying, 'I am a lover of peace, but your foolish arguments necessarily excite me to wrath. I prophesy that this controversy will end in something unpleasant. Once more let me ask you to think of our mutual affection and of the bitterness which this profitless discussion was sowing between us. If you still refuse to yield, I shall be obliged to take recourse to harsh measures, or call in the aid of the law.' The opponent replied, "I think going to law is the only reasonable course open to us: let the King decide who is in the right."

But still the dispute raged as hot as before, and a large crowd gathered at the spot to see the fun. Some of them tried to add fuel to fire, others to soften matters and bring the opponents back to reason. At

length when the dispute waxed so warm that there was no possibility of an amicable settlement, one of the by-standers proposed to refer it to the court of Raja Indra, and the proposal was hailed with joy by both parties. The disputants accordingly repaired to the court of Raja Indra and begged for a private audience of His Majesty, which was immediately given. With the utmost humility they laid the cause of their dispute at the feet of the god Indra, who, after carefully considering the arguments *pro* and *con*, pronounced judgment as follows :—

“These are very delicate questions, and it is beyond my power to give a final decision. Raja Vikrmaditya is, I think, the fittest man for this purpose. You had better go to him.”

With this evasive reply Raja Indra dismissed them from his presence, and they then hastened to the court of Vikrmaditya, where they found the King sitting in his public hall, to which they easily gained admittance. Prostrating themselves at his feet they stated their case, point by point, one after the other, and concluded by imploring the Raja to pass judgment without any partiality, assuring him at the same time that neither party would protest against his verdict but would accept the decision as final. They told the Raja that they had been sent to him by the god Indra, and that they only prayed for justice. After some deliberation the Raja said that it was an intricate and knotty problem that they had brought to him, and that he could not decide it lightly. He told the disputants to see him at the end of six months,

and till then he said he would reserve his judgment. The parties quietly took their leave, apparently well-satisfied.

The Raja kept pondering over the conflicting claims of the doctrines of free will and predestination, unable to reconcile them, unable to give a decided preference to either, unable to obtain any solution that would give him peace and rest. He kept brooding over his thoughts, till they became like an eddy in which his mind was whirled round and round. At last he thought that there was a possibility of solution if he went out into the world and witnessed with his own eyes the manifestations of freedom and necessity in the ways of nature and of man. He accordingly equipped himself for a long journey, and set out from the palace, determined not to return home until the supremacy of free-will or fate had been conclusively proved to him.

He first did not know where to go: his aimless thoughts drove him hither and thither in an aimless fashion. After two weeks of wandering, a populous city came in view. He entered it, and after a while his mind seemed to be cheered with the rays of returning hope. The beauty of the city was like that of paradise itself, and the Raja gazed upon it with wonder-struck eyes as he beheld the sea bounding the eastern limits of the town and dashing upon the coast in a never-ending succession of waves.

The marble palace of the Raja of this city was a wonder among wonders. Passing along through the public thoroughfares of the city he noticed a vast

multitude of men gathered in front of a shop to see the grand display of jewels which were exposed for sale. The owner of the shop, superbly dressed, was sitting with a party of friends, all dressed in rich clothes like himself, and conversing with them in careless fashion. The Raja went up to the owner and said, "I am a stranger, on the look out for employment. I could not get a chance of paying my respects to the Raja of this place to-day, otherwise he would surely have taken me into his service. Darkness has set in, and I do not know where to go. I therefore pray you to allow me to pass the night under your hospitable roof."

"What is your name?" asked the jeweller, "and where are you coming from?" "I am coming from Ujjain, and my name is Vikram," replied the Raja truthfully. There was something in the looks of the stranger that raised a doubt that he might be other than he appeared. His handsome features, his dignified bearing, his polite and refined speech, made such a favourable impression on the merchant's mind that he said, "Though you do plainly appear to be a fit member of the royal household, yet would you consent to live with me for some time?" "With all my heart," replied Vikram. "What pay are you willing to accept?" asked the merchant. "Thirty lakhs of rupees per month," returned the Raja. "Why have you set such a fabulous price upon your services?" demanded the merchant. "Because," answered the Raja, "I undertake to serve my master faithfully even at the risk of my life." Further conversation

followed, and the upshot of it all was that Vikramaditya was appointed.

Vikram used to spend the whole amount of his pay in charity, and kept for himself just enough for bare subsistence. Not long after, the merchant decided to set out on a voyage with a view to trading with foreign countries. He chartered a ship and loaded it with a cargo of the rarest and choicest merchandise, and taking a number of old and trustworthy servants, he was ready to embark. Vikram was at first omitted and ordered to remain at home, but he begged his master not to deprive him of the chance of serving his master in foreign lands with the same zeal and devotion that he had shown at home; and his request was immediately granted. When all preparations were complete, the ship set sail, blown on her happy course by fortune and favourable winds.

For the first few days the merchant was much troubled by sea-sickness, this being his first experience of a sea-voyage. He touched at many ports, and traded with the inhabitants of the coast, and at each place made lucky bargains. All went well for some time, the wind continuing favourable, but one day as they were on the high seas a violent hurricane suddenly caught the vessel and drove her far out of her course, inspite of all that the brave crew and their gallant captain could do to keep her in her proper track. This caused a panic on board, but at last the ship found a haven of safety, where they cast anchor and awaited the cessation of the storm.

Fortunately the storm was of brief duration, and when it abated, the captain ordered the sails to be unfurled again, and the anchor to be hauled up. But it so happened that the cables fastening the anchor had got entangled somewhere under the surface of the water, and the united exertions of the crew to drag it up proved fruitless. The captain cried in his despair that the bed of the sea would be their grave in the event of a second hurricane bursting upon the ship. Their condition seemed to be so hopeless that some of the crew thought it would be better to jump down from the deck and perish in the waves at once than to wait and die inch by inch. At this moment Vikram stepped forward and declared that he could set the vessel in motion again. "That would be an excellent thing to do," shouted the rest, "but how do you propose to accomplish it?" "It is in emergencies like this that servants are tried," said Vikram; "my master has lavished favours upon me, and I am prepared freely to risk my life in an attempt to save his." So saying he asked some of the sailors to tie a rope around his waist and to drop him into the sea, so that he might dive down below the keel and disentangle the anchor, and when that was done he might be pulled up on the deck again. But the people tried to dissuade him from this plan, as they thought there was grave danger in it. Vikramaditya however insisted on trying his plan, saying, "How can I see my master in danger, and look on with folded arms?" "What else can you do in a situation which is equally perilous to all?" remonstrated

his friends ; " give up this vain fancy of yours whilst there is time. Why should you be so bent upon self-destruction ? " " I implore you," said Vikram, " by all the affection you bear for me, to allow me to reap the honour of sacrificing my life for the sake of my master. If I fail, my death will be a glorious one ; if I succeed, I shall have done a great service to you all." Vikram absolutely refused to attend to the words of his companions, and at length in despair they were obliged to give way and took him to his master.

The merchant had already heard of Vikram's bold device, and advised him like the other people, not to throw away his life so carelessly. Vikram humbly urged, " Do not withhold me from a project I have set my heart upon. Have you forgotten the promise I made at the time of my appointment, that I would help you in emergencies ? When death seems to be so imminent in any case, where is the mighty danger in risking it ? " The merchant yielded, and Vikram tied a rope around his waist and plunged into the sea. He dived below the bottom of the ship and with his sword cut the cable that held the anchor. Just then a sudden gust of wind put the ship in motion and blew her on her course so rapidly that Vikram got no time to climb on deck and was left behind at the mercy of the waves. He tried to swim as hard as he could, but failed.

All day long he kept floating, drifted hither and thither by the sea currents, and when night fell upon land and sea, he despaired of his life ; but

weary and spent as he was he kept clinging to the frail support of his sword, and great was his joy when morning light showed that he had drifted against an island. The cliffs on the coast were high and steep, but some roots of trees protruded in places, and by their aid he crawled up on shore and threw himself down to rest upon the green turf in a state more aptly called dead than alive. Overcome by weariness he fell asleep, lulled by the murmur of a clear brook that flowed close by. On waking up from sleep he felt very hungry and after some search he came upon some edible herbs and roots with which he satisfied his appetite. Here then, upon this desolate island, he abandoned himself to his fate, for there was no possibility of escaping from this prison, as he could neither discover a path across the sea nor devise any plan of scaling the mountains. At last he started in one direction, and found a sort of path, and after travelling for three or four hours he entered a forest of vast circumference, the interior of which was so dark that the light of day never penetrated its depths. He cheered his heart with the thought that this was the first wave of trouble which had rolled before him, and that the great ocean of affliction had still to be crossed. Undaunted by the darkness he held on his way through the forest. Every step that he took was attended with the most excruciating pain, for the ground was thickly covered with thorns and brambles which mercilessly pierced his bare feet through and through. To add to the terrors, beasts of the forest

were roaming on every side in search of prey. He was so tired that he felt he would drop down dead any moment. But he did not lose heart, and trusted to his fate. Shivering with anguish and half suffocated by the poisonous atmosphere of the forest, he came out of it at last, and offered thanks to God for his deliverance. Advancing farther he espied a town, and the thought that he would soon be in the midst of his fellow-men again, gave him further encouragement to plod on his weary way.

By and by he entered this city and saw a great mansion that looked like a king's palace. The day had been very hot and finding himself in a narrow street where the pavement was sprinkled with water, he sat down to rest on the shadow of the palace and to enjoy the cool breeze that was blowing. As he was sitting at this spot his eyes accidentally fell on a door across which was pasted a sort of placard bearing a notice which he interpreted to mean that Shinghavati, the princess of that country, would be married to Raja Vikramaditya. He was naturally quite amazed to see this, and thought that it must be the prophecy of some learned Pundit. He rose up from the ground determined to put the prophecy to test. So he proceeded towards the female apartments, and, strangely enough, the guards at the gate, struck by his royal mien and courtly airs, did not venture to bar his entrance. He loitered about from room to room, and through each door that he passed he caught glimpses of splendid gardens, of rich stone-built houses. He came across no one inside the palace,

and his first thought was that it was empty, but on entering an open door he found himself in a vast and luxuriously fitted hall, where forty young ladies, splendidly dressed and of perfect beauty, were reclining on couches. As soon as they saw Vikram they rose up, and according him a hearty welcome, begged him to take a seat that was placed up on a dais. Not content with this he boldly sat down on a couch lying beside a fountain on which reposed a most charming lady locked in the arms of sleep and fanned by two maids one on each side. This was the Princess Shinghavati. Vikrmaditya, acting on the strength of the inscribed prophecy, strode up to her and gently shook her by the shoulder, and she woke up, and finding Vikrmaditya sitting beside her, she at once threw herself at his feet. She recognised him at the first glance, for no disguise could blind the eyes of love.

"Princess", said the Raja, "if I have been bold with you, you have your own youthful beauty to blame." For the damsel was so perfectly lovely that no words could adequately set forth her marvellous charms. Picture to yourself the most clear-cut features, joined to a brilliant and delicate complexion and an enchanting expression of the face, and even then the imagination will fall short of the reality. At the very first whisper of love she was inclined to disclose the secret of her heart, but modesty forbade her. At last, having sent all her attendants out of the room, she made an opportunity of speaking to her lover in private. Her eyes moistened with tears

and unable to suppress the swelling emotions of her heart, she broke forth, "Dear soul, do not keep me pining in solitude any longer, but bind me to yourself by ties of wedlock. I know I am quite unworthy of this honour, but I have been tortured by the pangs of love more severely than I have the strength to bear. Ever since I looked upon your portrait I have felt such a convulsion of love that no words can adequately describe my feeling, and now, when I have beheld your face, love has become complete master of my heart and soul. Being mistress of my own hand I have decided to throw the garland of matrimony around your neck, and if I fail, I have vowed to wear the ornament of virginity to the end of my life. If you are not willing to accept me as a wife, take me as a slave, and I shall be content to live as a menial all my life."

Vikramaditya accepted the proffers of love, and further gave her such a vivid account of the perilous adventures he had passed through, that her heart was softened to the utmost limit of tenderness. The marriage was celebrated on the same night, and a great banquet was held in the hall, to which all the leading noblemen and gentlemen of the city were invited. At the close of the banquet there was a nautch party, and when the dancing and music were over, the Raja retired to his bed chamber.

Days passed on in happiness and mirth, and the Raja and his new queen seemed to forget the world in the enjoyment of each other's company. The Princess was very fond of her handsome and learned

husband and passed whole days in conversation with him, amusing him with tales of the manners and customs of her country which were so different from those of his. The Raja too, who had to bear so many hardships and encounter so many dangers since he left Ujjain, was happy to find a home where at last he found both rest and peace. But alas! trouble was soon brewing in another quarter. It so happened that the Princess had a maid of honour who belonged to a respectable family and was her chief confidante. By chance her heart was also captivated by the Raja's looks, but being afraid of her mistress she could not venture to offer her love openly, although inwardly she was pining away and seeking a chance for a private meeting with the Raja.

One day when the Princess was in the garden, this maid of honour entered the Raja's chamber, and having made a low obeisance, kept standing before his seat, waiting to be noticed. The Raja was busy reading a book, and after some time he lifted up his head and inquired what she wanted. With another low bow she replied, "I thank Your Majesty for your bounty, and your slave wants nothing else. I crave your pardon humbly beforehand for my presumption in beseeching Your Majesty for the liberty I am going to take." "Well", said the Raja, "let me hear your wish. Where is your Princess?" "My Lord," she answered, "the Princess, your queen, has gone to have a stroll in the garden to enjoy the pleasant evening, and I have thus got this opportunity of revealing my secret thoughts to you. My real

motive is to gain nothing for myself but to remind you of your own circumstances. It is true that my mistress loves you with all the ardency of a virgin, but how long can you stay at this place? You have cast aside all the cares of sovereignty to pass your days and nights in amusement. Have you ever wasted a thought upon your kingdom or reflected over the sufferings that your subjects may be undergoing during your absence? Your loyal people must be anxiously awaiting your return, and here you are whiling away your time pleasantly in the company of a lovely maiden! God knows what awful fate might be hanging upon them. It is a shame for a king to pass his time in such utter oblivion of his subjects and to lie day and night on a couch of luxury. It is a shame for any gentleman to forget his home, to forget his wife who has put her faith and trust in him, and to spend his life idly in pleasures of the senses. The Rajas of ancient times had greater love for their subjects than for their own sons: I do not know what new fashion the Rajas of modern times are adopting. You may think I am jealous of the Princess, but this is far indeed from the truth, although I must confess that the shaft of love has passed through my heart since first my eyes beheld your form. Since then your image has been stamped upon my heart in such a way that it cannot possibly be effaced by any agency. Pray keep these words to yourself, for if my mistress will come to hear of my secret visit, my head will surely pay the penalty for my presumption. I have not the least wish to search into your concerns or to

stand in the way of the fulfilment of your wishes. But if you are pleased to reflect on this matter in the privacy of your heart, I daresay you will perceive the truth of my assertions, and then you may do whatever you please. It is my highest ambition to live and die your slave, but even this seems to be denied to my fate. Well, I shall continue to be happy in your happiness, wherever you may be."

With a flash the truth dawned upon the Raja's mind as he followed the maid's narration with such rapt attention that a sort of sadness spread over his face. At last he said, "My heart tells me that what you say is just and reasonable." He made her sit down beside himself and began to talk to her affectionately, telling her that the Princess had often told him of her high qualities and ready wit. Referring to the sadness that had spread over the Raja's countenance, she said, "It must be the recollection of your native land that has made you so sad". "No, no", replied the Raja, "I was only thinking how I could get back to my home." "Leave that to me", she said, "I can devise a better plan than you. Listen. There is a black mare in the stables who can gallop over land and sea and take her rider to the remotest corners of the earth in the twinkling of an eye; and this horse shall I place at your disposal." The Raja's anxieties were soothed to hear this, and he said to the maid, "You have rendered me a valuable piece of service: name your reward, and you shall have it." At this she gracefully smiled, and cast a sidelong look on the Raja and said, "I only

beg you to remember that women too may sometimes prove of service to a king," and with these words she suddenly slipped away.

Just at this moment the Princess returned from the garden, and hastening into the Raja's chamber, she found him absorbed in thought. She knelt down before him and asked him to tell her the cause of his sadness. But the Raja only replied that his mind had fallen into a temporary fit of melancholy, and then he rose and chatted again with her, as if nothing unusual had happened.

Next day the Raja went with the Princess to inspect the stables, and seeing many fine horses he said, "I want to have a ride." The Princess asked him to choose any horse he liked, and the Raja then picked out the black mare about which the maid had told her, and got her saddled. As soon as he was firmly seated on the back of the mare, he waved his hand in token of farewell and spurred his horse to full career. The spirited animal sprang like a flash of lightning and was in a moment out of sight. The Princess waited for the Raja's return till midnight, and wondering what could have kept him away so long, she fell into deep anxiety about his safety. When morning dawned and still the Raja did not return, she was driven to despair; her spirits drooped, and she fell into a swoon from which she never recovered.

Meanwhile the Raja galloped on until he came to Ambavati, where a renowned devotee had his abode. The Raja was anxious to pay his reverence to this holy man; so he halted at Ambavati for this

purpose. Dismounting from his horse he entered the devotee's dwelling and placed his head upon the ground before him. The saint blessed the Raja and put a garland round his neck, saying that as long as he retained the garland no one could defeat him in battle. He presented him also the stump of a walking stick and said, "In the first quarter of the night it will give you as many jewels as you will ask of it; in the second it will provide you with a beautiful woman; in the third, it will enable you to see the world without being seen yourself; while in the last quarter it will guard you against death." The Raja accepted the two presents with thanks, and mounting his steed again, resumed his journey. He travelled at his accustomed speed and galloped so fast that in two hours and a half from the time of starting he saw the capital of Ujjain extending before his eyes.

He alighted at the city gate, and discerned two human figures in the dark. Approaching nearer he saw that both were Brahman mendicants going about to beg for alms. Seeing a mounted gentleman they made their supplications to the Raja, and the Raja, with a generosity simply inconceivable, gave away the garland to the one, and the stick to the other, imparting to each their respective virtues. He then entered the city and went into his palace. Next morning the Raja's return to the capital was announced by the firing of salutes, and immediately a stream of high officers poured into the hall to accord loyal welcome to their King. There were great

rejoicings also in the city. When the news of the Raja's arrival became widely known, the two men who had a dispute about fate and free will, visited the Raja and requested him to pass judgment on their case as promised. The Raja gave his verdict that both disputants were right in their views, for neither free will nor fate was the absolute truth, both being perfectly equal.

When her tale ended, the image appealed to Raja Bhoj once more to give up his vain attempt to sit on the throne of Vikrmaditya, for none who was not equal to Vikrmaditya could rightly aspire to sit on his throne. The Raja was roused to anger even at this tacit comparison between him and Vikrmaditya, but kept a sullen silence and did not move off from his seat.

Seeing him still sitting moodily and silent, the sixth image by name

Kam Kandla

began her exhortations as follows:—" Why wait any longer, and dote over a desire sure to defraud you in the end? Have we not repeatedly told you that nothing but harm can result from an obviously foolish fancy? A desire that entails suffering and uneasiness is more a curse than a blessing, and you are unable to understand this simple matter. Your mind seems to be like a slippery surface on which nothing can stick, and there seems to be an

impediment in your brain that shuts off all useful counsel."

These words served merely to aggravate the Raja's wrath, and unable to check himself any longer he at last spoke out, in a voice quaking with rage, "Why are you bent on working your own ruin? Silence alone is safe for you: take heed of the consequences if you venture to kindle my anger."

The image thereupon proceeded to tell a story of Raja Vikrmaditya:—"One day a Brahman came to the court of Vikrmaditya and said that since His Majesty was very inquisitive to hear of the marvels of nature and of art, he would tell him of a most miraculous wonder if the Raja were only pleased to listen to his story. "What is that?" asked the Raja most eagerly. The Brahman began, "Some two or three miles away from this place there is a tank with a stone pillar standing in the middle of it. As soon as the sun rises the pillar shoots out of the bosom of the lake and grows in height in proportion as the sun ascends higher in the heavens, till at midday its summit touches the sun. Its growth is then arrested for some minutes while the sun halts in his progress at noon and after refreshing himself proceeds on his journey again. Then the pillar too begins to shrink until in the evening, when the sun sets, it disappears altogether below the surface. The Raja was much interested to hear this, and dismissed the Brahman with a large reward. At break of day he remembered his demons and expressed a desire to see this wonderful lake. The demons

forthwith lifted the Raja and his throne on their shoulders, and took to flight, and in a short time deposited him on the margin of the lake. It was situated in the middle of a jungle and flocks of geese, ducks, and other waterfowl disported on its waters. All round it ran a continuous flight of steps meant for bathing purposes. Lotuses blossomed on its bosom; trees grew on its banks, and under their thick foliage the breeze blew cool, the birds sang sweet, and many-tinted flowers opened their bosoms and lent their fragrance to the balmy winds, and the sweet honey in their cups to the busy lips of the buzzing bees that swarmed everywhere about the neighbourhood. On the whole it was a scene fitted to please the most fastidious lover of nature.

On reaching the margin of the lake, the Raja commanded the demons to carry him to the top of the pillar, and when he was securely seated there he ordered them to go and await his pleasure on the bank. The pillar carried the Raja higher and higher till the earth looked like a speck in the distance below. He found the heat in those aerial regions rather unbearable, but there was now no going back. At last, as he approached the sun, he was scorched to death. Everything happened precisely as the Brahman had described. The chariot of the sun stopped at midday, but the driver forbade his master to pause for refreshment that day and pointed out a dead body on the top of the pillar. The Sun seeing the dead body of the Raja took pity on him, and

sprinkled some drops of the water of immortality upon his ashes, which were instantly restored to life. The Raja rose up and prostrated himself before the sun and kissed his feet a thousand times, saying, "I shall now deem myself the happiest mortal in the world, for I have had the good fortune to pay homage to the Sun-god." "I too was very anxious to meet you," replied the Sun-god, "and I am glad that I have gained the object of my heart." The Sun-god presented a jewelled ear-ring to the Raja and said that as long as he would wear it in his ear he would remain invincible. He then inquired of the Raja what had induced him to come up there, and Vikrmaditya replied that he had no particular object in view beyond the desire of paying his reverence to the Sun-god. Now the pillar gradually came down again the way it had gone up, and after that, vanished from sight in the bed of the tank. The Raja summoned his demons again, and they brought him back to Ujjain. Shortly after a beggarly Brahman came and recited a piece of poetry in praise of the Raja's charitable disposition, and the Raja, finding nothing else to bestow upon the Brahman as a reward, gave away the jewelled ear-ring which he had received as a present from the Sun-god.

Coming to the end of her story, the image turned to Raja Bhoj and said, "Such was Vikrmaditya, peerless in fame, peerless in generosity, and you can yourself perceive the absurdity of your wish to sit upon his throne. You may look upon it as long as you like, but you may not sit upon it."

Raja Bhoj gave no reply to this, and then the seventh image named

Komdi

made her obeisance to the Raja, and taking her cue from the last speaker, said, "I pray Your Majesty may abandon the vain conceit of your being equal to Vikramaditya, a monarch whom none has equalled nor will equal. If you had not constantly checked yourself from sitting on this matchless throne, you would surely have caused it to vanish from sight long ago. It is necessary for me to explain how this would have happened."

Raja Bhoj replied that he still refused to admit that he was in any way inferior to Vikramaditya.

"Well," said the image, "that is an equivocal answer."

"Hold your wagging tongue," cried the Raja in a fit of passion, "otherwise you will be the object of my serious displeasure."

"Pooh!" answered the image, "when you do not observe even common courtesies, what an empty vaunt it is to rival a prince of saintly character like Vikramaditya. Now, listen to a story about him, and judge for yourself. On a cold, dark and stormy night, when the river roared below the palace walls, the sound of a woman's weeping and wailing rose above the howling of the tempest. The Raja was wakened from sleep by these cries and he said to himself, "Poor soul, this must be a woman in distress, crying for

help. Cursed be the Raja who does not care for the grief of his subjects : I must therefore hasten to her relief." With this thought he rose softly from his bed, and putting on his armour stole quietly out of the palace, without raising the least alarm. The night was intensely dark, and the wind blew furiously and beat the rain in sheets upon his face, but he fearlessly made his way to the ford and stepped into the flooded water. Inch by inch, and foot by foot, he fought his way across, now nearly swept off his legs by some advancing swirl or eddy, now narrowly escaping death, being caught in the branches of some floating tree that came tossing and swinging down the stream. At length, panting for breath and dripping with water, he emerged on the other side. Close to the bank stood a gallows, and on it hung a dead body, whilst from the foot of it came the sound of wailing that he had heard. The Raja was so grieved to hear the cries that he thought nothing of the wildness of the night or of the roaring river, but walked up towards the gallows at the foot of which he noticed the figure of a woman crouching for shelter. "What ails you ?" asked the Raja of her. "O kind Sir," she replied, "it is my poor son who hangs upon the gallows there, and all I want is to see his face once more and to give him a farewell kiss. Help me, noble Sir, and I will bless you for ever."

The Raja thought that her voice betokened rather eagerness than sorrow, and he suspected that she was not telling the truth, so he determined to proceed

very cautiously. "That will be rather a difficult task," said the Raja, "for the gallows is high, and we have no ladder." The old witch answered, "Ah, but if you just stoop down and let me climb upon your shoulders, I think I would be able to reach him." Now her words sounded so cruel that the Raja was almost sure that she intended some evil. But he merely expressed his willingness to do what the woman suggested, and drew his sword pretending that he needed it to lean upon, and bent down so that the woman could climb upon his back, which she did nimbly enough. The old witch then began to devour the dangling corpse, and drops of blood happened to fall upon the Raja's back. He was exceedingly horrified, but remained in that stooping posture without moving. At last he cried out, "I am unable to bear your weight any longer: you must get down. I hope you have given the last kiss to your son." The woman was obliged to get down and then she confessed, "I am a witch, but I promise to grant you a boon. Be you who you may, if I am not much mistaken, your condition is above what you appear to be." The Raja thanked her for her kind offer and added, "As regards me you have rightly guessed that I am not a common man: I am a king, and my name is Vikrmaditya of Ujjain. And he gave her a brief history of his life from the beginning, and when he had finished, the witch exclaimed, "I am very pleased with you for your dauntless courage in coming to the rescue of a poor woman. I have also heard many praises of your chivalrous

character, and I am glad to find that your conduct is worthy of your reputation. I shall be happy to do you a good turn, if you only let me know." The Raja contemptuously replied, "What canst thou give to others when thou thyself feedest on dead bodies?" "Don't think so," replied the witch; "do ask me for some gift, for I am just now in a giving mood." "Very well, then," said the Raja, "give me a vessel such that whatsoever I might take out of it, it might always remain full." "All right, you shall have such a vessel," returned the witch; "but come with me; one of my sisters dwells a mile away from here, and she will give you what you want."

The Raja sat down for a while to pause and reflect, and during this interval the storm also ceased. Then the witch, accompanied by the Raja, walked over to her sister's house, and when she reached the door she clapped her hands and the door flew open and her sister ran out to receive the visitors. After embracing each other with sisterly affection, the witch introduced the Raja to her sister, and told her of the services he had rendered to her and of the gift she had promised to him. The second witch at once presented a purse to the Raja and told him that he could draw an inexhaustible supply of whatever thing he wanted to take out of it. The Raja accepted the purse thankfully and started back to his palace. On the way he met a Brahman who begged him for alms, saying that he was dying of hunger. The Raja dived his hand into his purse and brought out a quantity of sweetmeat which he gave to the

Brahman. The greedy beggar, seeing the miraculous virtue of the purse, persistently entreated the Raja to give it away to him, and Vikrmaditya, who was naturally incapable of refusal, bestowed it upon the Brahman and resumed his journey, reaching the court before dawn of day.

At the conclusion of her story, the image made a personal appeal to the Raja: "O Raja, I assure you there is a vast difference between you and Raja Vikrmaditya. He was truly a King of kings, a god among mortals, and for a hot-headed king like you to aspire for a seat on his august throne is the worst of all vanities: the very idea is revolting. You have just heard a story from me illustrative of his generosity, and you can now judge yourself whether you are worthy of the honour you covet."

Raja Bhoj fell into a deep rage again at these disparaging remarks. The bare idea that there was a difficulty in his way made him more determined than ever to carry out a plan. He was ready to run any risk to gain his object, but by the advice of his courtiers he decided to resort to stratagem rather than to force. While he sat revolving in his mind a series of plans, the eighth image named

Pushpamati

spoke out, and said, "Are you still waiting at this spot with your crowd of attendants, hoping by perseverance to conquer our opposition? Vain hope, vain wish! I know that the sight of this gemmed

and jewelled throne is proving an irresistible temptation to you, but I cannot help telling you once more that the fates themselves are adverse to your wish."

The accumulated heat of the Raja's wrath at last vented itself in a stream of angry words and he exclaimed, "By God, ye are growing more and more insolent every day, and your boldness is becoming rather reprehensible. I have repeatedly pardoned your liberty, out of consideration for the lovely throne, otherwise I should have buried you all long ago. I should prefer to treat your remarks with the silent contempt that they deserve, but your attempt to cheat me and to throw dust into my eyes compels me to meet your deceit with denunciation."

"Do not be so wroth," replied the image, "we have given you no cause for anger. Our lives, we know, are at your mercy, and we are indebted to you for having spared them so magnanimously. For myself, I shall be further obliged if you lend your ears to my story."

"Go on," said the Raja, "I am all attention."

The image then began her story, which was as follows:—Raja Vikrmaditya was once enjoying a festival, a magnificent spectacle prepared by the citizens in his honour. Evening was drawing on, and the Raja was about to give signal to his courtiers to retire, when suddenly a carpenter appeared before him, leading a wooden horse, richly caparisoned and looking in every respect like a living horse. Prostrating himself before the Raja he said, "Although I am appearing

before you at such a late hour I can assure you that none of the wonders you have seen to-day can be compared to this mechanical horse, and I can convince you of this if only you will condescend to cast your eyes upon it once." The Raja looking at the horse said, "I see nothing particular about this except a clever model of a horse, and I think any skilled workman can do as much." The carpenter replied, "It is not the outward figure that I would commend to your notice, but the wonderful appliances set within the structure. I have only to mount him and wish myself in any particular place, and no matter how distant it is, I shall find myself there in a few moments. It is this, Your Majesty, that makes this horse such a marvellous product of human ingenuity, and if you allow me, I may give you a demonstration of its powers."

The Raja, who was interested in every uncommon thing and had never before seen a mechanical contrivance of such wonderful make, bade the carpenter mount the animal and show what he could perform. In an instant the man had vaulted on his back, and before any one could notice what he did to set the animal in motion, both horse and rider flew up and vanished from their gaze. In a quarter of an hour the man was seen alighting on the ground, guiding his horse to the foot of the throne where he dismounted. When the Raja had seen the astonishing speed at which the horse could fly through the air, demonstrated before his own eyes, he was seized with a strong longing to possess the

animal, and indeed so sure was he that the owner would be quite ready to sell it, that he looked upon it as his own already. He asked the carpenter to name the price he was willing to accept for his invention, without first asking him if he was willing to part with it. "Greatly as I prize the animal," humbly represented the carpenter, "I shall be happy to yield it in deference to Your Majesty's wishes. This horse was not made by me, but was given to me by the inventor. It has also the power of passing over seas as easily as it can fly through the air." "Name any price you like," said the Raja, interrupting him. "I beseech you," replied the carpenter, "not to be offended if I say that I shall be glad to deliver the horse to you on payment of a lakh of rupees." A burst of laughter escaped the lips of the assembled courtiers as they heard the fabulous sum named by the carpenter, evidently in the belief that he could easily extort a fortune since the Raja had taken a fancy for his toy. The Raja however did actually agree to pay the price and only made one condition: "If your statements about the horse prove false your head shall answer for it." With this he ordered the treasurer to pay a lakh of rupees to the carpenter. The treasurer remonstrated that it was too large a sum to pay for a mere toy, but the Raja angrily replied, "Yes, you are a wise counsellor, but you do not realise either the value of the horse or the fact that I have many times forbidden you not to mix your mind with mine. Give him two lakhs, instead of one, and for the future I warn you not to

criticise my orders but to obey them without demur." The treasurer handed over the ordered amount to the carpenter who was overjoyed to receive double the sum that he had himself demanded.

Next evening the Raja rode upon the horse, and turned the starting screw and was in a moment out of sight. The rapidity of the horse's movement, as he himself felt it now, took the Raja by surprise; he almost felt giddy; he could see nothing around himself except blue ether; and he wished he had never made the ascent. For an hour he continued to ascend higher and higher till the mountains below could not be distinguished from the plains, and in a moment all earthly landmarks had passed out of sight. Then he thought it was time to come down, and took it for granted that in order to do this all he had got to do was to turn the same screw in the contrary direction; but to his horror he found that, turn as he might, he did not make the slightest alteration in the direction of the motion. In his impatience to buy the horse he had not taken the precaution to ask the carpenter how he was to get back to earth again, and he realised the danger in which he stood. But fortunately he did not lose his head, and set about examining the horse's neck with great care till at last, to his intense joy, he discovered a tiny little switch, much smaller than the starting screw, close to the right ear. This he turned, not knowing what the effect would be, but the next moment he found himself dropping down towards the earth, somewhat more slowly than he had ascended. It was now dark,

and as the Raja could see nothing he was fain to allow the horse to direct his own course. It so happened that the horse struck against the top of a tree, and the Raja, bruised and bleeding, dropped down on the ground, but luckily escaped serious hurt. Faint and weary as he was, his first anxiety was to discover where he was, and he soon ascertained that he was in the middle of a forest. The Raja ran wildly about in search of a path by which he could escape from the forest, but the sound of his footsteps only attracted the attention of a pack of hungry wolves who sprang towards him with their jaws gaping wide and their tongues lolling out of their mouths. The Raja climbed upon a tree and crouched among the branches to obtain some sort of shelter for the night. He snatched a wink of sleep at times, but the feeling that he was alone in the midst of a dreary waste made him often start up and look around himself in trembling alarm. You may imagine what a fearful night he must have passed. However the morning light at last restored his courage, and he once more wandered doubtfully among the trees wondering what fearful object he might come across next.

He climbed a tree again to discover a path which might lead him out of the forest, and from its top he caught sight of a building which towered into the sky and on the roof of which was placed a bed surrounded with every object of comfort and luxury. In the courtyard were two wells dug side by side with a tree in between. The Raja wondered who it could

be that lived in such a lonely forest, trying to conceal himself from the world's eyes. Just as he was musing upon this a devotee came out of the jungle and went into the courtyard. He beckoned to a monkey sitting on the top of the tree that stood between the wells, and when the monkey jumped down at his feet, he drew some water from one of the wells and sprinkled it upon the animal, and lo! in a moment the monkey was transformed into a lovely woman. The devotee then passed the whole day in her company, and when evening approached he retired into the jungle again, as he was in the habit of performing his devotions during the night. But before leaving the house he drew some water from the other well and sprinkled it on the woman, and she again became a monkey. The Raja who had watched all this from his leafy perch, now came down and restored the monkey to human form by the same process that the devotee had used. His eyes were dazzled to see her beauty, but fascinated though he was, he knew the danger he was in, for a single shriek from the woman might have brought the devotee back to the place, and then his death would have been certain. So sinking quietly on his knees, he gently caught the lady's sleeve, as though in supplication of aid or assistance. Seeing a well-dressed youth of handsome features, she betrayed no alarm, but an expression of surprise rested visibly upon her face. The Raja sought to banish her surprise and alarm by assuring her that he was no bandit or necromancer, but an honest adventurer who had

lost his way. "Madam," he began, "you see before you Vikrmaditya, King of Ujjain who, in consequence of an adventure so strange that you will scarcely believe it to be true, finds himself here a suppliant for your protection. Yesterday I was in my court; to-day I am in an unknown land, uncertain what to do or where to go." She listened with eager curiosity, and then answered, "Be not uneasy. Hospitality and humanity are practised everywhere in civilised society. The protection that you ask for shall be given to you." The Raja was about to thank her for her goodness when she added quickly, "However great may be my curiosity to learn by what means you have travelled here from Ujjain so speedily, I know that you must be faint for want of food and rest." So she conducted the Raja to one of her chambers where supper was provided and a bed spread out for him to take some rest. After that she quitted the room. At night she dressed herself with particular care and thought, "If my appearance was not displeasing to the Raja when he saw me in negligent attire, how much indeed will he be struck with my beauty when he beholds me decked out in all the charms of art." She then went into the Raja's room to know if he was ready to receive her; but the Raja was himself ready to go to the Princess' room to inquire if he might be allowed to pay his homage to his kind hostess, and meeting her at the door he returned into the room, accompanied by the lady of the mansion. After the usual compliments had passed between them, she sat down on a

sofa and before entering into the conversation, thought it fit to apologise for not having been able to receive the King in her own apartments. "For," said she, "had I done so, we might have been interrupted; whereas this is forbidden ground." She then added, "I am all impatient to know what lucky chance has given me the pleasure of entertaining you in this castle. Pray tell me how you could effect an entrance within this magic stronghold." The Raja told the whole story of his adventures upon the mechanical horse, the mention of which made the Princess start in wonder and declare that she could never have conceived anything half so surprising. The Raja went on: "In an instant I was soaring upwards much quicker than the speed of an arrow, and I felt I must be getting so near the sky that I should soon hit my head against it. I could see nothing beneath me, nothing around me, except the invisible air, and for some time I was so confused that I did not know in what direction I was travelling. At last, when it began to grow dark I found a second switch, near the horse's right ear, and on turning it, I began slowly to sink towards the earth. I was forced to trust to chance, content to abide by whatever my destiny had in store for me, and it was just midnight when at last I found myself landed safe on the *terra firma*. It did not take me long to discover that I was in the middle of a forest, and the remaining hours of the night I was therefore obliged to pass among the branches of a tree. I thank the tree for having afforded me the

means of discovering this palace, and more, for discovering you. The rest of my story you know yourself, and it only remains for me to thank you for your hospitality and to assure you of my readiness to serve you. By the laws of civilised society I am already in debt to you: by the law of nature I have become your slave, and have only my heart that is my own to offer to you. But what I am calling my own, alas! was yours from the first moment I beheld you. Now, may I hear an account of yourself from your rosy lips?"

The concluding portion of the Raja's speech, and the air with which he spoke these words, could have left no doubt in the mind of the Princess as to the effect of her charms, and the blush which crimsoned her cheeks conveyed a message of hope to the Raja's heart as well.

She was unable to speak for some time, being overpowered by a sort of nervousness which a maiden is sure to feel in the presence of a stranger. At last, when her confusion permitted her to speak, she said, "Sir, I have followed your enchanting story with the closest interest. Let me tell you how deep a debt I owe to the chance that has led you hither. More I cannot say. As to your being a slave, of course, that is a mere joke, and my reception itself must have assured you that you are as much a free agent in this castle as at your own court; and as to the formal offer of your heart, I am sure that must have been given away long ago to some noble princess who is well worthy of it, and I cannot think

of myself being the occasion of your proving unfaithful to her. My story, alas! is a tale of woes, and you have guessed rightly in supposing me an unwilling prisoner in this grand mansion. I am the unhappy daughter of a King, by name Ram Deo, of whose fame you must have heard. Once my father was cross with me, and gave me away to this abominable magician who brought me here to this enchanted castle in a state of trance. For a long while I did nothing but weep, and could not suffer the magician to come near me, but time teaches submission, and I have now got accustomed to his detestable presence. I receive daily a visit from him at an appointed hour in the morning, but in case I should need his help at any other time I have only to remember him, and forth he issues from his secret cell and stands in front of me. At daybreak, therefore, you must hide yourself in the forest, and return to me in the evening, so as to leave the whole day quite free for him, and then during the night we shall be left to ourselves, with no fear of interruption from any one. Remember that if he catches us together, he will consume both of us to ashes with his curse. For he is a jealous fellow, and does not like to see me in the company of any man."

"He cannot harm me," replied the Raja proudly; "on the contrary I can make him do whatever you wish." The Raja was going to launch into a description of his own magic powers, but was interrupted by the Princess who said that dinner had been announced, and after all neither of them was sorry for the interruption. Dinner was served in a magnificent apartment

in keeping with the rest of the building, and the table was covered with delicious viands. After dinner the conversation was resumed.

By this time Vikrmaditya plainly perceived that the Princess was deep in love with him, and he himself felt a ready response in his own heart. But his love for the solitary Princess did not make him forget his duty towards his family and towards his subjects. So he said, "I do not know, Princess, how to express my gratitude for your kindness, but the recollection of my family begins to pain me as I think of the intense anxiety they must be suffering on my account. While I am enjoying the society of the loveliest and most amiable of princesses, they at home are, I fear, plunged in the deepest grief, being ignorant even of my whereabouts and in despair about my safe return."

The Princess was too sensible a lady not to sympathise with the Raja's natural solicitude to return to his own home; but she was much ruffled at the idea of his departure, more especially since she feared that he would quickly forget her. So she made one more effort to keep him back, and of course the Raja was too chivalrous to refuse her request. The Princess did all she could to make the Raja's stay as pleasant as possible and provided all kinds of entertainment to beguile him, and she succeeded so well that two weeks slipped by almost unnoticed. The Raja used to pass the day in the forest, and the night in the delightful company of the Princess. But at last one day he determined seriously to take leave, and entreated the Princess to put no further obstacles in the way of his

going, promising at the same time to return to her as soon as he could, attended by all the pomp and magnificence due both to her and to himself. "Princess," he added, "it may be that in your heart you class me with those false lovers whose devotion cannot stand the test of absence. If you do, you wrong me, and were it not for fear of offending you, I would beseech you to come with me, for I feel I cannot be happy without you. As for your reception at the court of Ujjain, I promise you as cordial a welcome as any princess ever received from a loyal people."

The Princess did not know what to say to this invitation, but her silence was answer enough; her modest gaze and appealing looks plainly signified that she was now as eager to accompany him as she was, a few days back, to detain him. There was only one fear which troubled her, and so in a tone of tender appeal she said, "I pray you, do not give me away to another, as I have heard that you are matchless in generosity: my fondest desire is to pass the remaining days of my life in your service." The Raja smiled and made answer, "Princess, where are your thoughts wandering?"

Next morning, as usual, the Raja was away to the jungle after transforming the Princess into a monkey. Just after his departure the devotee came in, and changed the monkey back into human form and passed the whole day, as was his wont, in her company. In the evening when he was about to leave her, the Princess said, "Since you brought me to this castle you have never given me any token of your love, and I beg

you will now make amends for the past and give me a present such as I would cherish with the tenderest affection." The devotee gave her a lotus flower and said that it would yield a ruby every day for her, and himself went away to the forest. At nightfall the Raja came back to the palace and brought the princess back to her original human shape, and they discussed plans of escaping from that enchanted castle. The only difficulty that occurred to the Princess was that perhaps the Raja did not know how to manage the mechanical horse properly, as she had heard from his own account how he himself narrowly escaped a catastrophe in consequence of that inability. But he soothed her fear on that score, and then with a free heart she began to arrange for their flight, and she carried out her plans so successfully that no one in the palace suspected anything. Early the following morning while the palace was wrapped in sleep, she stole away out of the gate, where the Raja was already awaiting her with his horse's head turned towards Ujjain. The Raja mounted first and helped the Princess to a sort of pillion behind him, and when she was firmly seated with her hands holding tightly to his belt, he touched the button and the horse began to ascend heavenwards like a rocket.

Shortly afterwards the devotee, according to his daily practice, came to the palace, and having found no monkey on the top of the accustomed tree, he guessed what had happened. His heart was filled with grief and despair, and dashing his head against

the tree he broke his skull and died. The Raja and the Princess sped through the air like a flash of lightning, and the Raja guided his horse so dexterously that in a few hours the temples and towers of Ujjain appeared below the horse's feet.

He alighted just outside the city gate, and travelling on foot he led the Princess by the hand to the royal palace. While walking along the streets he was welcomed with shouts of joy by the people who had lost all hopes of seeing him again. A child who was playing at the door of a house, seeing the lotus flower in the hands of the Raja, began to cry bitterly for it, and the Raja, unable to restrain himself, gave away the precious flower to the child, the same that yielded a ruby daily. Reaching the palace, he found the ministers clad in the deepest mourning, as they had all given him up for lost, and they almost went out of their mind with surprise and delight at the mere sound of their master's voice. When the shock of surprise had subsided a little, they begged the Raja to relate his adventures. Meanwhile the Princess went into the female apartments of the palace, and the Raja got the opportunity of telling the whole story of the Princess, how he had met her, how she had treated him, and so on, not even concealing the fact that they had fallen in love with each other and contemplated marriage. The marriage was delayed only to give time to make the ceremony as brilliant as possible, and as soon as all preparations were complete, it was celebrated with great pomp and rejoicing.

As for that lotus flower given away by the Raja,—

well, it yielded a ruby daily, and the father of the child to whom it was given, hardly knew what to do with so many rubies. At last he decided to sell them, and took them to the bazaar for sale, but every jeweller who saw them was struck with admiration for their beauty, and expressed his inability to pay their proper value. A suspicion immediately arose against the man, who was soon arrested and hauled up before the Raja. The Raja, just to play with his innocence, asked, "Where did you get so many brilliant rubies? If you tell the truth, I promise to set you free." The poor fellow told the whole story of how his child had come by the lotus flower, and the Raja ordered him to be liberated.

At the conclusion of her story, the image said, "Now you see what kind of man Raja Vikrmadittyā was, and I hope you also perceive the vanity of your wish to sit on this throne; abandon this futile wish, I pray you, or the story of your disappointment will travel before you wherever you go."

Raja Bhoj was in no mood to listen to cold counsel, for he was carried away by a strong desire to sit on this lovely throne, and words of prudence merely served to nettle him. So he said, "Your insensate speech tempts me to resort to harsh measures, but pity forbids me to turn this work of wonder into a wreck."

It was now the turn of the ninth image named

Madhumawati

to interpose herself between the Raja and his wrath,

so in a tone of entreaty tempered by sternness she said, "O Raja Bhoj, do not imagine that you can baffle us by a mere show of temper. Your obstinacy is most provoking. Bethink yourself what you owe to your name and to the noble blood of your ancestors. It is shameful to think that a king belonging to a noble, ancient and renowned family should be so headstrong."

The Raja's anger grew fiercer at these words and he cried in a loud tone, "If persuasion has failed to win your consent, I have another weapon in hand to make you submit ; but I pity your helplessness. What a rude fashion you have adopted to storm at me daily ! Let me tell you once for all that I do not think myself in any way inferior to Vikrmaditya."

" I beseech you," replied the image, " do not be offended with me. If we have said that you are far behind Vikrmaditya, we have not done so arbitrarily, nor from mere guess : we have solid reasons for holding this view, and this is why we do not allow you even to touch this throne. The mystery of it will solve itself one day without the need of your trying to unravel it. Meanwhile let me tell you a story of Raja Vikrmaditya from which you ought to infer some of our reasons for withholding you from occupying this throne :—

Once upon a time an aged Pundit visited the court of Raja Vikrmaditya. Seeing him coming, the Raja saluted him in his mind without bowing his head or lifting up his two hands, and the Pundit discovering the fact with the aid of his astrological prescience, returned the Raja's salute by blessing him in the customary

fashion. With a pretence of offence the Raja said that a blessing which was not preceded by a salutation was tantamount to a curse, and that a learned Pundit like him should not have made such a serious mistake, or assumed something on pure supposition." "Sire," returned the Pundit, "Your Majesty had saluted me in your mind, and hence, I submit, I have done no wrong to merit your displeasure." The Raja was greatly pleased at this answer, and gave the Pundit a high appointment in his court, and in addition made him a cash present of five lakhs of rupees.

"Such was Vikrmaditya, not only unapproached but unapproachable in generosity, and," said the image, "you may yourself now judge the difference between you and him. To specify instances of his incomparable generosity would be merely to lengthen the account. Taking everything into consideration, I advise you to abandon your foolish idea of ascending this throne."

Raja Bhoj turned away in wrath from the throne room, but next day, impelled by the same desire, he came again. The images kept their silence till he actually raised his foot to mount the throne, and then the tenth image named

Premawati

spoke out, "Remember that you are a king and that it ill befits your dignity to covet a seat on this throne only to be repulsed each time. I know not how to convince you of the truth, or to dispel your

arrogant notion of being equal to Raja Vikrmaditya. It is admitted on all hands that my Raja occupied a more exalted position than you in every respect. You ought to learn patience which is the first step on the road to happiness, and a virtue indispensable in a mighty king."

These words threw the Raja into a towering passion again, and he said, "Every day you raise a storm and rail at me, and I almost feel inclined to pay you back in your own coin. But thinking of the dishonour I shall thereby bring upon myself I abstain from such a course."

The image replied in a tone of mild reproach, "I have never seen such a peevish and ill-tempered king. There is an old saying that whoso will not take counsel will surely take battle, and it seems I must reckon you with this class of individuals. Now listen to a story of Raja Vikrmaditya from my lips :—

Once during the spring season Raja Vikrmaditya was sitting in his garden which was intersected by winding streams and redolent with the perfume of lovely flowers that blossomed everywhere in vernal profusion. A wretched man who bore on his person every mark of wretchedness, was seen entering the garden, and advancing up to the Raja, he made a profound obeisance and kept standing where he paused. The Raja quickly observed that, although in the garb of a beggar, the man had some signs of nobility depicted on his face—

" His withered cheek and tresses gray
Seemed to have known a better day."

"Who are you?" asked the Raja, "and where are you coming from?" The poor fellow kissed the ground before he answered that he was really a prince but had been reduced to that wretchedness through having fallen a victim to the snares of love, and added, "If Your Majesty will do me the favour of listening to my story I will relate it as briefly as possible." The Raja expressed his willingness to hear the story, and the man began: "One day I heard praises of a princess's beauty from the mouth of a palmer, and I was so excited by his description that I made haste to visit the place where she lived, in order to catch a glimpse of this paragon of beauty. I was then a wild youth, undisciplined in the school of experience, and hence it was that I madly rushed in where sober minds would have hesitated to go. However I succeeded in my wish of seeing the princess, and I actually found her far lovelier than her praises had represented her to be, and what was perhaps a foregone conclusion to myself—I quickly fell in love with her. Ah, she is more beautiful than words can paint,—of peerless beauty, peerless in the most literal sense of the word. Grace attends every step that she takes,—magic works in every look that she darts. Her softly arching eyebrows are like a pair of drawn swords ready to strike against my head. Her eyes are filled with both nectar and poison,—in a moment they can kill, in another, restore to life. In my case her eyes have administered the poison only, and I am dying for her. The report of her matchless beauty has spread far and

wide, and many a powerful king has sent embassies to ask her hand. The king, her father, has received these embassies graciously enough, but has sternly declined every proposal, saying that he has taken a solemn vow to wed her to that brave hero who will bathe in a tank of boiling oil and come out unscathed from the ordeal. The envoys had therefore to return as disappointed in their mission as they were gratified by the magnificence of their reception. Hundreds of lovers have burnt themselves like moths in the flame of her resplendent beauty."

The recollection of his lady-love brought on by the above speech, distressed the poor man's mind so greatly that his senses forsook him for the time, and down he fell on the ground, his head dazed, and his eyes upturned. Two of the Raja's attendants ran and lifted him up from the ground. They sprinkled rose-water on his face and fanned him till he revived. For some time more he sat motionless and speechless, and although several people enquired into the cause of his sudden indisposition, he returned not a word in answer, but continued to gaze vacantly on the walls. The Raja was touched at the man's distress, and tried to comfort him by saying, "Do not grieve, you shall gain the object of your heart and successfully pass the qualifying ordeal; and then you will come to know that impossibilities are more often apparent than real. You are her destined husband, though at present it does not appear so. As for my help, trust my best endeavours in your favour."

At these encouraging words the man got up from

the ground, and making meet acknowledgments for the Raja's kind offers, took his seat near the throne. The Raja ordered his servants to give him a perfumed bath and a suit of the best clothing, and at night, after supper, a bevy of beautiful dancing girls were sent for, and there was music and dancing in the royal hall, where the Raja and the principal officers of state sat watching the *nautch* up to a late hour. The Raja had arranged this dancing party in order to beguile the mind of his guest, but the stranger sat absent-minded throughout the proceedings, brooding over the beauty of his mistress. The Raja retired to his bed chamber shortly after midnight, and the dancing ceased.

When the first faint light of dawn streaked the eastern horizon, the Raja got up from bed and remembered his demons. They came, and the Raja took his guest with him in his flying chariot and took a voyage through the air to the place where the Princess resided. He found the place exactly as his guest had described it. It was a long time since a suitor had presented himself to try the terrible ordeal of the boiling oil, and a crowd soon gathered round the Raja, pitying his youthful looks, his handsome features, and dignified bearing. They dissuaded him from making the attempt, saying, "What are you thinking of, noble Sir? Why expose yourself to certain death? Yonder plain is strewn with the bones of defeated suitors, and is not this a sufficient deterrent?" But the Raja remained firm in his resolution and drily thanked them for their

courtesy. "He is resolved to die," said they to themselves, "may heaven have pity on him!" Passing through the crowd, the Raja came to where the cauldron was boiling, and here he paused a moment to give instructions to his demons, and to the horror of the gazing crowd, he jumped in, and was fried to death. The demons, who hovered over the cauldron in invisible form, immediately sprinkled the water of immortality upon his dead body, and he was instantly restored to life, and the grief and horror which filled the minds of the spectators was suddenly turned into joy. They thought the Raja must be a god in human shape to come alive from the very jaws of death. The father of the Princess admired his heroism, and embraced him affectionately as he stepped out of the cauldron, and ordered public rejoicings in honour of the happy event.

The same night at an auspicious moment the Raja and the princess were united by ties of holy wedlock, and loud congratulations resounded through the hall. Dancing and singing was the order of the day, and every form of rejoicing that imagination could devise or royal affluence sanction, was held in celebration of the princess's happy nuptials. Banquets, dancing parties, illuminations, fireworks, all combined to produce a scene of reckless revelry. The costliest jewellery was presented to the bridegroom, and a group of slaves, of both sexes, formed part of the dowry. The Raja accepted both the bride and the dowry in trust for his friend, whom he had promised to help in winning this Princess.

After the marriage festivities were over the Raja expressed his desire to return to his own country, and his request was gladly acceded to. He bade good-bye to his father-in-law, and the latter took a courteous farewell of his son-in-law in the following words:—"God knows what sin I had committed in my previous birth that I should have kept my daughter unmarried so long. Thousands have lost their lives for my folly. How can I atone for this sin? As regards my daughter I am happy to say that she has carefully maintained her honour in her high position and kept the noble purity of her character free from blot or blame. And as for you, my son, I owe you a debt of gratitude for having turned me away from my path of sin."

The bridal party, consisting of the Raja, the princess, and their attendants, left the palace amid beat of drums and the firing of royal salutes. In a few days they reached Ujjain, and arriving here the Raja gave the princess and everything else he had brought to his friend, the distracted lover, who gratefully kissed the Raja's feet for his kindly assistance, and then went away to his own country.

This was the story of the tenth image, who, at the conclusion of her tale, turned to Raja Bhoj and said, "I have given only a single illustration of only one of the thousand virtues that graced the character of Vikrmaditya. For you, therefore, to entertain a wish to occupy his throne is a pure vision, in feeding upon which you merely feed upon wind." But Raja

Bhoj only replied, "Your tales are absolutely prejudiced and false."

Parmawati

the eleventh image adopted from the beginning a tone of rude banter, amounting to actual insult. She greeted the Raja reverently no doubt, but her words were far from reverent : " Your pig-headed perversity will work your own destruction. You may be a man of learning, but Raja Vikrmaditya was, what is far higher, a man of true nobility of character, not a spark of which can I detect in your person. It is itself a shame to think of rivalling him, and as for excelling him, pooh ! it is worse than a dream." At these words the Raja lost all patience, and had he not been already accustomed to a little of this kind of talk, he would have shattered the throne, images and all, in one blow. Hence he contented himself with angry words instead of angry blows,—" Shut up ! Shut up ! stop spinning cobwebs like a cunning spider. Your lying words have a sting in them, and I can hardly restrain myself from wreaking revenge upon you, but that I feel that you will yourself pay the penalty of wagging your tongue in this manner ere long."

The image coolly replied, " I shall soon soften your rage by relating a tale:—One night, when Raja Vikrmaditya was fast asleep, he heard the voice of a woman apparently crying for help. He started up

from sleep and pricked his ears to listen. Sometimes the voice sounded distinctly, at others heard too faintly to be intelligible. "It must be some poor creature in distress," he thought, "while I am reposing comfortably on my bed. How shall I answer God on the Day of Judgment when I am asked to explain my inactivity on this occasion? My ease and luxury will surely not plead my cause."

Thereupon the Raja instantly got up from bed, and having armed himself with a sharp sword, started in the direction from which the voice came. The night being very dark he could not see his way clearly, and the rain that was falling at the time made matters worse. His path lay through a forest where many a hungry beast bounded hither and thither, howling for prey, and the echoes of the night redoubled those frightful cries. But the Raja still walked on, impelled by a goading sense of pity. Shortly afterwards the same piteous cry was heard again, and the Raja's steps became quicker and his courage sharper. Traversing about a hundred yards the Raja discerned two figures in the darkness, one of them a giant, the other a woman who was being mercilessly beaten by him. The Raja asked the giant politely to have pity on the woman, saying that it was an unmanly deed to beat a woman even if she were in fault. "Keep thy advice to thyself," replied the giant contemptuously; "who art thou to interfere with me, unless thou seekest thy death at my hands?" "I fear no living foe," returned the Raja, "and as for my advice my sword will be my interpreter." Despite this

threat, the giant seized the woman again by the hair and belaboured her with blows. The Raja remonstrated once more, threatening the cruel giant with instant death, but the giant only grinned a broad grin and remarked, "Strange that an ant should have the hardihood to challenge an elephant. I am ashamed to stain my hand with the blood of a fly, or to pulverise thy bones into a handful of dust. Take thy way and do not try to interfere with me: I must have this woman for myself and would not brook a rival in my path." But the Raja was not the sort of man to turn back. He challenged the giant to a combat, and the two began to grapple with each other fiercely. The giant rushed forward with seemingly irresistible might and attacked the Raja who warded off the blow successfully and himself struck such a blow on his antagonist's shoulder that it shook his unwieldy frame from head to foot. Without giving him time to recover his breath the Raja dealt a second blow that laid him prostrate on the ground. As soon as the giant fell, two other giants sprang up in his place, and they too fell upon the Raja similarly. It was now two against one, but the Raja continued the struggle with unabated fury and courage, till shortly before daybreak one of them was killed and the other took to flight, leaving the Raja master of the field. But since he was exhausted by the long fight, he sat down to recover himself a little, and then got up and asked the woman he had rescued to tell the story of her sufferings, assuring her that she was to his eyes but as a daughter. The woman blushed at these

words and drew a piece of cloth like a veil over her face to hide the rising spot on her cheeks. She was suffering from fright, and her virgin bashfulness proved an additional hindrance to speech. But the Raja's voice was so kind that at last she gathered courage and said, "O saviour of my life, and protector of my innocence, I am the daughter of a rich Brahman of Sangaldwip. Once I went in the company of my attendants to bathe in a tank specially meant for my use, and as I was drying the tresses of my dishevelled hair in the sun, the giant whom you first killed, caught me and fled with me to this forest. He wished to force me into marriage, and tried every means he could to induce me to yield to his wishes, but I persisted in giving him a flat refusal, for how could I have offered the precious jewel of my virginity to a grisly giant? Now yesterday, when I sternly forbade him to renew his proposal, he fell upon me like a fiend and assaulted me brutally, and I endured it all, determined rather to die at his hands than to give my consent. Then God took compassion upon a miserable creature and sent you to my rescue."

The Raja invited her to his palace, where he offered to keep her with every possible care and comfort. But the lady pointed out that the giant who had fled away was still at large and might be preparing to make a fresh attack upon them. So the Raja waited for that chance till sunset, and when evening fell the giant did return and challenged the Raja to another fight, which ended in the death of this giant also. Immediately afterwards, a woman appeared on the

spot, and seeing the giant lying dead on the ground, took to her heels and tried to escape out of the Raja's notice, but was soon caught and forced to stay. She was a woman of uncommon beauty, the sight of which touched the Raja's heart as he said to her, "It is most surprising that such a delicate and lovely creature should attach herself to an ugly giant."

The woman thereupon began the story of her life which was as follows:—"I was one of the attendant spirits of the god Shiva, who happened to curse me in a moment of wrath and transformed me into a woman of flesh and blood. Much was I confused to put on this strange fleshly garb, but I knew that sufferance was the best virtue of a woman, and so I endured my lot with patience until one day this giant suddenly appeared before me, and solicited my love. I replied that I was one of the female votaries of Shiva, without whose consent I could not give my hand to any one. Accordingly the giant invoked the aid of Shiva of whom he asked me as a gift. The god was pleased to give me away to him and commanded me to serve him faithfully and diligently. The giant brought me to this forest where I lived with him upto the moment of his death. I was running, not to flee from you, but to bring the water of immortality to restore the dead giant to life. Now let me know your commands." "Take not my commands but my service, and accept my truest and best love." The woman smiled a smile of sweet acquiescence, and the Raja conveyed both her and the woman he had rescued, to his palace. One of them, the Brahman's girl,

was given in marriage to a learned Pundit who also received an ample dowry with the bride. The other woman he married himself.

Thus ended the tale of the eleventh image who at the conclusion of her story, turned to Raja Bhoj and said, "Now uproot the thorn of this foolish desire from your heart, or it will continually prick you and cause you pain: I tell you a thorn can never blossom into a flower nor fructify into a sweet fruit."

She had hardly finished her speech when the twelfth image named

Kirtimaty

joined her entreaties to those of her preceding sister, and added, "The throne of Vikrmaditya is for those who are the like of Vikrmaditya: it cannot be occupied by such as you. Vikrmaditya was noble, broad-minded, high-souled, a King indeed among kings, a perfect pattern of kinghood. His purse was always open for the relief of suffering mankind, and whenever any misfortune befell any of his people, he was sure to extend a hand of sympathy to aid the distressed."

Whenever a comparison was aimed at between Vikrmaditya and himself, it invariably excited the wrath of Raja Bhoj, who on this occasion angrily exclaimed, "I have repeatedly told you of my determination to sit upon this throne, and now I can only add that you shall bitterly rue the consequences of

your obstinate folly in case it puts me to the necessity of having recourse to stringent measures to enforce my will."

" We have as repeatedly entreated you to abandon your greedy desire to sit on this throne, but our daily prayers have hitherto fallen upon deaf ears and our honest advice gone unheeded. Now try and prove yourself worthy of your illustrious lineage." To this the image received only a rebuke in reply, whereupon she begged permission to tell a story relating to Raja Vikrmaditya, and having obtained it she thus began :—

Raja Vikrmaditya once asked his courtiers if they could name any prince who was equal or superior to himself in generosity. One of them stood up and apologising for his frankness said, " Yes, there is a Raja who dwells on the shores of the sea, and he is, I think, greatly superior to you in munificence, for it is his daily practice to bestow a lakh of rupees upon the poor in the morning before he takes his food. His charity is literally unbounded, and no one has yet been able to discover the source from which he derives the vast wealth which enables him to support this stupendous form of charity."

Vikrmaditya was seized with strong curiosity to see this charitable prince, and next morning he summoned his demons to carry him to this seaside country where dwelt the above-mentioned Raja. Arriving in that place he sent his demons back to keep watch and ward over his own kingdom during the period of his absence, which was expected to be

a long one, as he intended to enter into the service of this new king. Having sent his demons back, Vikrmaditya entered the city and walked directly to the Raja's palace and applied for employment. The king cast a careless glance upon the stranger and asked him what his name was and where he was coming from. "My name is Vikram," was the reply, "and I am coming from Ujjain. In early age I was turned into the world to shift for myself, and I have served masters in different capacities. Now fate has led me hither to seek service in your court." The king next asked him to state what pay he was prepared to accept, and Vikram replied that he demanded a thousand rupees a day, and in return promised to serve his master with unflinching loyalty and devotion, cheerfully undertaking any work however difficult or dangerous. The king accepted his terms and appointed him.

Vikram's duties were naturally very light in a court where there was no scarcity of servants, and hence he had a very easy time of it for the first few days of his service, except that he constantly suffered from anxiety as to what might be happening in his kingdom of Ujjain. One night as he was lying on his bed, unable to sleep owing to a rush of thoughts crowding upon his brain, he heard the door of the king's bed-chamber open with a creak, and saw the king himself quietly come out of it. He wondered what the matter was that the king should leave his bed at that late hour of the night, and determined to watch his movements secretly. Soon he saw the king

issuing out of the castle gate and taking his way towards the forest. Vikram also stole out of his room and followed his master's footsteps at a safe distance to see where he went and what he did. He also thought his presence might be of service to his master, going as he was entirely unguarded through a lonely forest. After travelling for a mile or so he came in sight of a temple dedicated to a goddess and enclosed by a beautiful tank. The king went to this tank first and took his bath, and then went into the temple, offered his adoration to the goddess, and then plunged into a cauldron of boiling oil and was fried to death. This he did to purge himself from the pollution of flesh, and immediately after, the goddess, assuming the form of a woman, appeared at the spot, and sprinkled the water of immortality upon his roasted body and restored him to life. When he came out of the cauldron the goddess gave him a lakh of rupees with which he left her presence and went back to his palace.

Vikram had watched the whole affair from a secret covert, and as soon as the Raja had passed out of sight, he came out of his hiding-place, and performed exactly the same processes that his master had done, and got a lakh of rupees similarly. He repeated the process seven times over and collected a sum of seven lakhs of rupees. When for the eighth time he was going to plunge in the boiling oil, the goddess caught hold of his hand and said that she was extremely pleased with his devotion and asked him to name a boon. "Give me that purse" said Vikram,

"from which you gave me a lakh of rupees each time I burnt myself in the boiling oil." The goddess could not decline even this request from a votary who had proved his devotion so many times, and Vikram receiving the purse kissed the feet of the goddess and came back to his quarters without arousing the faintest suspicion.

In the morning, according to his daily practice, the king bestowed a lakh of rupees upon the poor before taking his meal, and at night, as usual, he went to the forest to receive his nightly present from the goddess. But this night as he reached the site of the temple he was frozen with horror at the sight of the desolation which he witnessed all round. The temple was lying a heap of ruins in the water of the adjoining tank, and the presiding goddess had fled he knew not where. In an agony of despair he began to dash his head against the trees of the forest, hoping against hope to attract the attention of the goddess by his lamentations; but his cry was literally a cry in the wilderness; there was no goddess anywhere now, and he was obliged, after a time, to return home with heavy steps.

Next morning, the Raja's throne in the hall of audience was empty. Beggars were thronging the gate, clamouring for their daily dole, but the Raja was unaccountably absent from the hall. Later on it was announced that the king was confined to his bed by serious illness. The court physicians were at once in attendance, but strangely enough, the King refused to take the medicines prescribed by

them. The Prime Minister sought a private audience which was granted, and at which he confidentially inquired into His Majesty's health and intimated that an anxious crowd were thronging at the gate to hear the first happy tidings of the king's recovery. After a brief silence, the king said that his indisposition was due to mental anguish caused by an irreparable loss, which it was needless for the minister to know, but which would doubtless bring on his death. He asked the minister to trouble himself no further about enquiring into his sickness but to convey his thanks to his loyal people for their sympathy in his suffering. The minister left the royal bed, plunged in the deepest anxiety and perplexed as to what this irreparable loss could be.

Vikram also petitioned the King to grant him a private audience, and when he was ushered into the king's sick room he saw that His Majesty was actually in agonies. In a cheery voice he asked about His Majesty's health and added, "If there is any grief or trouble that is preying upon your mind, be it whatever it may, pray impart it to me, and I promise to heal it. You remember that at the time of my appointment I gave a guarantee of helping you in all kinds of difficulty, and here I am ready to fulfil my promise." "As you are a trustworthy servant" said the King, "I shall tell you all without reserve. There was a temple dedicated to a goddess in the neighbouring forest, and I used to go thither every night and receive a lakh of rupees as a present from the goddess, and next morning I used to bestow the

entire sum upon the poor in charity. So deeply did I feel for the distress of the poor that I suffered to be burnt every night in boiling oil to procure the wherewithal to relieve their misery. But last night to my horror I saw that the temple of the goddess was lying in ruins, and the goddess herself vanished from the scene. Now where shall I get money to help the poor ? I cannot afford to pay a lakh of rupees daily from my State treasury. When my life's ideal has been shattered to pieces, death alone can save me from the resulting misery."

Vikram replied, "I myself am witness to all that you have said," and he gave the king a faithful account of his adventures on the preceding night,—how he had secretly followed the King to the forest, how he had obtained the purse from the goddess, and so on, and then presented the same purse to the Raja, whose face beamed with joy at the sight of it, and all trace of sickness was gone in a moment. In place of the lakh of rupees which he had to obtain by undergoing a terrible ordeal every night in a dark forest, he had obtained the purse itself out of which he could draw his daily lakh of rupees without the necessity of subjecting himself to voluntary death. For some time he was too overjoyed to speak, and when the transports of joy subsided a little, he said, "What a signal piece of service you have done me indeed; even if I were to offer you my life in gratitude, it would be but a poor recompense, for I did actually sacrifice my life every night before the goddess to obtain merely one out of countless lakhs

that I can now draw out of this purse." Vikram replied, "O, speak not in this strain: the safety of the master is the servant's highest reward, and little else do I, your humble menial, crave of Your Majesty." He only asked for three months' leave to go home and see his people, and this, of course, was readily granted. "But when will you come back?" asked the Raja. "Tell me definitely, and let me know also your full address so that I may be able to communicate with you in case of need."

"I shall not keep up my disguise any longer," said Vikram, "for my task is done. You must therefore know that I am Raja Vikrmaditya of Ujjain, who had personated myself a menial to court your Majesty's friendship and alliance with my State, and since I have now ample guarantees of that, I shall go back to my kingdom and wish you continued good health and happiness."

The King fell down at the feet of Vikrmaditya and with the deepest humility said, "Miserable wretch as I am, I failed to recognise the most illustrious monarch of all Hindustan, and suffered him to serve me as a menial when I was not even fit to lick the dust of his feet. Pardon me, my liege, and believe me to be your most faithful vassal. You have verily been the saviour of my life and the maker of my fortune. Even if I had a thousand tongues to sing your praise I could have done but poor justice to your noble virtues." Vikrmaditya returned the compliments in suitable style and took leave of his grateful friend and came back to Ujjain.

"Do you now feel," asked the image, at the end of her story, "what a great gulf there lies between yourself and Raja Vikrmaditya? And from this you will easily perceive the hollowness of your pretensions to equality with that unequalled prince. Change your mind, therefore, I pray you; it is an utterly vain endeavour to chase a phantom."

It was now the turn of

Trilochani

the thirteenth image, to open her lips, and she said, in a tone in which light banter was mixed with serious counsel, "Raja Bhoj is noted for his untractable obstinacy as Raja Vikrmaditya was for his unbounded generosity. What a pity it is that a mighty ruler should be devoid of ordinary common-sense. Is it not shameful to think that one whose memory is adored by the world should not be held in honour by one of his own descendants? Some of us have already expostulated with you for your baseless presumption to claim equality with Vikrmaditya by taking your seat on this jewelled throne, and we have, in the friendliest manner possible, tried to impress upon you the fact that the consequences of such a step would be ruinous to yourself. But alas! you have paid no heed to our words so far. It is practically certain, therefore, that your ungovernable passions will involve you in shame and sorrow in the end. If you do not want to trust to the advice of

any counsellor through fear of being misled, your own judgment ought to enable you to foresee the consequences of your self-willed doggedness before you assume that attitude."

Anger and resentment swelled the Raja's bosom as he observed, "You are all playing the coquette with me. When I have explicitly told you to keep your apolagues to yourself, then why do you continue to wag your tongue in this manner? I do not want to overshadow the memory of Vikrmaditya, and hence spared his throne from the destruction in which you obviously wish to involve it by your prating tongue." The image replied, "Your fiery denunciations make no impression upon me. Now listen to a story of Vikrmaditya and cool down the fire of your wrath:—

Raja Vikrmaditya was very fond of the royal game of hawking, and one morning he called his sportsmen together and set out for a forest where he ordered his men to let loose their hawks while he himself stood aside to watch their sport. Soon however he too flew his hawk at a lovely bird that flitted from a neighbouring bush. The hawk quickly seized its prey and holding it in its claws alighted on the ground. The Raja advanced, hoping the *shikari* bird would drop its prey, but as soon as he approached the hawk fluttered away out of reach. The Raja pursued it, but the further he chased the bird the further it flew away from him. His attendants, absorbed in their own sport, did not notice all this. The Raja then thought of killing the refractory bird,

but the bird still eluded his aim and led him on, by hill and dale, through the rest of the day, and when night came the crafty bird disappeared in the darkness. In despair, the Raja began to think of returning home, but the darkness of the night seemed determined to frustrate his efforts to find a path through the dark forest. Was he to mount up a hill or go down into a valley? Even if he persevered in his search of a path, how long was his strength likely to endure further fatigue? His body was scratched over by thorns and brambles, and even the skin of his horse was lacerated and bleeding in places. At last he jumped down from his horse, and tying it to a tree, he laid himself down at the foot of it, prepared to meet any form of danger or death that the fates might please to send down upon him.

Meanwhile, when evening fell, the Raja's followers made search for him throughout the forest, but failed to find any trace of him anywhere. With a heavy heart they returned to the city where the news of the Raja's sudden disappearance caused widespread anxiety and sorrow among his queens and people.

The Raja's condition in the lonely forest was growing more and more deplorable. Not only had he lost his way, and was beset by the darkness of night, but the weather soon became stormy and a regular tempest burst upon his head in full force. The howling winds, the roaring forest, the lurid flashes of lightning, the pelting rain, the impenetrable darkness, all combined to make up a scene of horror calculated to quell the boldest heart. But all

undaunted by these grim terrors, the Raja sat composedly on the bank of a river. At midnight he noticed that the river was gradually rising, and that the waves were dashing upon the bank with an angry roar. Shortly after, in the light of a lightning flash he discerned something dark floating upon the surface of the water, closely followed by two figures exchanging hot words between themselves, which however he failed to catch. The fighting figures, seeing a man seated on the bank, came out of the water, and accosted the Raja in the following words, "Sir, whoever you may be, we pray you to decide our dispute. One of us is a devotee, and the other a demon, and we both promise to reward you handsomely if your decision be satisfactory to both parties. Of course, we will accept your decision as final in any case." The devotee came forward first and stated his case before the Raja saying, "This dead body, which forms the subject of our contention, came floating from a long distance, and drifted along the bank near my cottage, and so I dragged it out of the water to use it as a cushion while performing my devotion. Just then this demon came up to me and tried to seize this dead body by force, evidently to use it as food. I remonstrated, but the fellow did not listen to reason, and hence followed the dispute which we have referred to your judgment." The other party, the demon, then came forward, and said, "Sir, do not give credence to his false statements. This wretched cripple, bent down by age and penance, is a monster of iniquity. He

professes to be a devotee, but he is only a double-dealing double-faced creature, whose exterior semblance does not at all correspond with his inner constitution." Then, addressing the opposite party he added, " O thou Cornish hug, thou wolf in sheep's clothing, why dost thou speak so meekly now? Dost thou mean to predispose the Judge in thy favour by means of honied words?" Then, turning again to the Raja he said, " Sir, please mark how he speaks in an undertone. I have followed this corpse a long way, and how shall I yield it up to this masquerader? He does not want it for a cushion, as he pretends, but to cram it into his stomach, for I tell you he is an ogre."

The Raja, after hearing both parties paused a while and said, " My judgment is that the corpse should be restored to the devotee and that the other party should take my horse in exchange." The demon bounded with joy to hear this decree, and instantly fell upon the horse and devoured it at a mouthful. The devotee acknowledged his gratitude by presenting to the Raja a magic purse which would never be empty and would supply all his wants for the mere asking. The demon's present was a piece of sandal-wood by rubbing which on his forehead the Raja could stand against the most formidable foe victoriously. And then the two left the Raja's presence, well satisfied with the happy termination of their dispute.

By this time the storm was over and the day had dawned. The Raja now thought of going back to the

city, but he had no horse, so he summoned his faithful demons and was borne in the aerial car back to Ujjain. Just before entering the city bounds he met a Brahman beggar who begged him for alms, and the Raja, not happening to have anything else about him, gave away the miraculous purse and imparted its virtues to the lucky recipient, who was overpowered with joy to find himself suddenly in possession of untold wealth when all he expected was probably a handful of rice sufficient for a single meal.

It is needless for me to describe the joy of the people when they saw their beloved King return safely once more to their midst. My story ends here, and all I have to add is to urge you once more to banish your presumptuous desire of equalling Vikrmaditya."

Raja Bhoj went back to his palace without saying a word this time, silenced but not convinced. Next morning the same fit of impatience seized his mind again, and he appeared in the throne-room at an unusually early hour. He was greeted by the fourteenth image named

Bilochani

in a rather discourteous fashion,—“I know what you have come here for, and it is well for you to withdraw from that wish without taking the trouble to express it, for the gratification of that wish is worse than impossible. Raja Vikrmaditya, whose throne

this is, was a superhuman being, a king who embodied in himself the most transcendent conceptions of sovereignty, a ruler whose reign was a veritable millennium. My heart breaks to pieces even now when I remember him." So saying the image burst into tears, and the Raja rebuked her saying, "Enough, enough of your crocodile tears : they move me only to laughter." The image thereupon dried her tears and begged the Raja to hear her tale which was as follows :—

Raja Vikrmaditya once held a great festival to which were bidden all the crowned heads of the world. It was a festival celebrated on an unprecedented scale of magnificence such as no one had ever witnessed before. Among the dignitaries invited on the occasion, was the Sea-god, to invite whom a Brahman ambassador had been specially deputed to his court. The Brahman went to the sea-shore to meet the Ocean-king, but all he saw there was the sea-water rippling on the coast with a soft murmur, and a glassy sheet of sparkling blue stretching in front of him. The Ocean-king was evidently not at home ; and the Brahman thought it was no use to wait for his return. So wearing a look of disappointment he started back for Ujjain. Fortunately about halfway he met the Sea-god in the guise of an aged Brahman, and he asked the messenger where he had been and why he was looking so dejected. The envoy said that he had been sent by Raja Vikrmaditya to invite the Sea-god to a festival at his capital, and requested him to do him the honour of accepting his invitation. The

Sea-god replied, "I should have been much pleased to go to Ujjain, but there is one obstacle in my way, inasmuch as if I leave my abode, the whole earth will be flooded with water. I feel highly flattered by the kind thought which prompted your Raja to send an invitation to me. Assure him that my alliance and friendship are pledged to him, and that my best exertions will always be directed in his behalf. I shall hand you five brilliant rubies and a valuable horse as a present for your Raja."

The Brahman took the presents and came back to Ujjain, and gave Vikrmaditya a full report of his mission to the court of the Sea-king. The Raja rewarded the Brahman for his services by bestowing upon him the five rubies and the horse he had brought as a present from the Sea-king. Such was Vikrma-ditya whose liberality was as boundless as the sea. Now, in the name of goodness, let me advise you, O Raja Bhoj, to curb your ambition of rivalling my Raja, because by accident you have come into possession of his throne." Raja Bhoj replied, "Your daily attempts to balk me only help to put me out of humour, and all that I want to tell you now is that this sort of thing cannot last long, and that you will be obliged to give way sooner or later."

Anupmati

the fifteenth image, began her speech with a gloomy prophecy: "I can clearly foresee that evil will be

the result of year stiff-backed opposition to our views and wishes, and of the haughty air with which you have rejected our counsels. You are proud of your wealth and glory, but remember that many a humbler man is wiser than you."

This saucy speech made the Raja's blood boil, and he exclaimed, "I cannot put up with direct insults." But the image interrupted him by giving further cause of offence in what she said next: "This is nothing. You are a headstrong, tart-tempered Raja, and your disposition needs wholesale correction before it can be said to be possessed of humanity."

"Stop that nonsense," roared the Raja in a white heat of passion, "a prating tongue is worse than no tongue at all." The image gave no answer to this, but proceeded to tell a story about Vikrmaditya :—

"One day when Raja Vikrmaditya was holding a Durbar in a beautifully-decorated hall, a Brahman Pundit appeared before him and recited a piece of poetry. The Raja, who was a generous patron of learning, gave him a lakh of rupees as an honorarium, and asked him to explain the meaning of the verses. The Pundit said, "My Lord, this poem was composed in ancient times and alludes to a story which runs as follows :—

Once upon a time there was a king who, when he grew to manhood, married an exceedingly beautiful princess, and lived as happy a life as seldom falls even to a monarch's lot. He loved his queen most passionately, and seemed to take delight in nothing so much as in her company. He shared his amusements and

pastimes with her, and indeed was so fond of her that he was, what in common parlance is called, a henpecked husband. One day when the queen was sitting beside him on the throne, his Prime Minister, who had filled that office under the late king, his father, came up and said, "If Your Majesty vouchsafes me a pardon, I wish to make a humble representation before the throne." The king ordered him to speak freely. Thereupon the Minister began, "High and mighty Prince, it ill befits your royal dignity that you should keep the company of the Queen at all times. We have ambassadors from foreign potentates present in this hall, and they are sure to say that you walk about tied to the apron-strings of your wife, and thus you will become an object of laughter to your brother kings. I beg humbly to suggest that you may get a portrait of the Queen drawn by some skilful painter, and then you may carry about this portrait without provoking any criticism. If Your Majesty approves of my suggestion I can venture to recommend a most skilful artist who lives in this very city." The king jumped at the Minister's suggestion, and ordered the painter to attend the court next day.

Punctual to the minute the painter came, and the Minister ushered him into the royal hall, and introduced him to the king as an artist who was absolutely unrivalled in his calling. The king ordered him to paint a portrait of the Queen, and the painter cast a single glance upon the queen, and left the royal presence.

In three months the portrait was ready, and it was indeed so well executed that it seemed to be an exact likeness of the Queen. Every one who saw it admired the beauty of the picture and the masterly skill of the artist. The King too was highly pleased with the work and bestowed many commendations on the painter. While gazing at the picture, his eyes accidentally fell upon a black spot on the thigh, and pointing to it he remarked that it was probably a blot that had escaped the artist's eye. "No, Sir," replied the painter, "the black spot represents a black mole that the Queen has on her thigh." And this was actually the case! The king, instead of being pleased at this marvellous precision displayed by the painter, fell into a violent rage, as he suspected that the painter had some illicit intimacy with his wife, for otherwise it was impossible for him to have knowledge of a mark that the Queen had on such a secret part of her body. The painter was therefore ordered to be instantly put to death. He flung himself at the king's feet and said that he had come to know of the existence of the mole by the aid of astronomy, but the Raja refused to believe him. The Prime Minister interceded on his behalf and pleaded for a regular trial to give to the accused the chance of proving his innocence by demonstrating his astronomical skill, but the king's rage had blinded him, and made him deaf to the voice of reason and justice alike.

In a few moments the poor painter was seized and dragged by the neck to the place of execution. But

the Minister stole behind him and used his influence with the executioner to spare his friend's life, telling the king, however, that his command had been duly carried out. The painter was kept carefully concealed in the Minister's house, while his property was by the law of the country confiscated to the State.

Now the king had a son who was very fond of hunting, and the father gave him full liberty to indulge his taste for this pastime. One day when the prince was out hunting in the forest, a lordly stag with branching horns sprang in sight. The prince gave chase to the animal and rode so hard that he out-distanced his followers and found himself alone in the depths of the forest, and no stag anywhere in sight. He drew rein, and looking around himself, perceived that he had really overshot himself and was now overtaken by night, with all means of return cut off from him. The night was intensely cold; the legs of his horse, weary as they were, had been stiffened by the freezing weather, and both horse and rider stood stock still in the middle of the lonely forest. Unable to move forward or backward, the prince at last got down from his horse, determined to spend the night at the foot of a tree and prepared for any eventuality. He knew that if he stayed the night in the forest his parents would grow very anxious for his safety, but what else could he do? He could not turn back, for the darkness was simply baffling, and moreover his horse was too tired to carry him any further. He was quite conscious of the dangers of his situation, but the danger of venturing

a return was no less dreadful than the danger of staying on where he was.

The Prince was absorbed in these disconcerting thoughts when he was alarmed by the roaring of a lion, who soon stood face to face with him, ready to spring upon him. In the excitement of the moment the Prince could think of nothing but climbing up a tree, but before he had gained the top, a pair of bright gleaming eyes met him half way, and a ferocious bear was seen crouching among the branches. He was now in a perilous position ; he had escaped from the lion only to fall into the mouth of a black bear. Paralysed with terror, he resigned himself to his fate, and began to curse himself for his love of a pastime which had led him into the jaws of death. He did not know what to do ; his legs were shaking from fear and his hands could but feebly grasp the slippery branches of the tree on which he had climbed for shelter but expected soon to be torn to pieces. He was on the point of falling down from the tree when the bear spoke out in a kindly tone, "Do not be frightened, but come up boldly ; I will give you shelter." The Prince, who understood the language of birds and beasts, having learned this as part of his education in conformity with the custom of his age, gathered courage at these words, and crawled up to where the bear was perching. The lion, who was watching all this from the foot of the tree, requested the bear to push the prince down, and thus do a piece of friendly service to a brother beast. The bear refused to do this, as he said the man had become

his guest and he could not betray him into the hands of an enemy, as this was clean contrary to the laws of hospitality. He advised the Prince to keep strict watch, for he feared the lion would keep prowling about the tree the whole night, and proposed that the two should keep their turn at watching for half the night each. The bear undertook to remain on guard till midnight, and asked the Prince to take some sleep during the interval. The Prince, trusting the bear's friendship, lost all his fear and fell asleep, and soon began to snore so loudly that the sound was caught by the hungry lion who became fiercer thereat. The lion, whose mouth watered at the idea of human flesh, again asked the bear to throw the prince down, failing which he threatened the bear with death. But the honest bear again refused to practise deceit and said he would rather lose his own life than treacherously surrender a guest into the hands of a bloody enemy.

By this time it was past midnight, and the bear roused the Prince from his sleep to do his turn at watching, and himself went to sleep. The lion now began to call upon the Prince to betray the bear into his hands, threatening him with vengeance if he refused to grant his request, for he said he would keep prowling about the tree all night and day and devour him whenever he got down from the top. The Prince at first declined to listen to the lion's proposal, saying that the bear had saved his life and that it would be the height of meanness to yield him up to a blood-thirsty foe. But the lion cunningly

added that it was an unheard-of thing for a bear to be the friend of a man, seeing that bears are the sworn enemy of the human race. He went on: "I tell you that if you regard the bear as your friend you will soon repent of your folly, or rather, it would be too late even for repentance. The fact is he has kept you for his own food, and will claw you to pieces when he feels hungry. I will tell you a secret if you give me your word that you will act upon my advice." "Let me know what it is," said the Prince eagerly, "and I will be highly indebted to you for your kindness." "Well, then, the bear has arranged to feast upon you to-morrow morning," said the lion; "I know his plans: he has communicated them to me in confidence. There is treachery lurking behind his profession of friendship."

The Prince believed the lion's words. In his heart of hearts he never trusted the bear; he was afraid of the lion likewise, and thought that it would be a successful way of ridding himself of both these enemies if he could throw the bear into the mouth of the lion. The bear would thus be made an end of, and the lion, with his hunger satisfied, would walk away, leaving the Prince a chance of escaping safely from the forest. So partly misled by the lion's deceitful words, and partly blinded by his own false judgment, he shook the tree with all his might in order to throw down the bear, but the bear startled by the shock clung firmly to the tree, and was saved. He at once discovered that the Prince had played treachery against him, and turned fiercely upon him with a storm

of bitter reproach. The Prince was greatly ashamed of his conduct and begged the bear with tears and entreaties to spare his life. The bear said that he was willing to pardon his life, but would remember his treachery.

At daybreak the lion, seeing his plans frustrated, walked away, and pounced upon the Prince's horse, satisfying himself with second class food in the absence of first. The bear leaped down from the top of the tree and disappeared in the thickness of the forest. But the Prince suddenly found himself deaf and dumb, as a result of something that the bear had secretly put in his ears, and proceeded to return to his father's court on foot. He was so spent by fatigue, hunger, and sleeplessness that his father was hardly able to recognise him. He put him a series of questions as to where he had been and how he had spent the night, but the Prince was neither able to hear nor to reply. His silence made the king very anxious and he ordered the court physicians to examine the Prince. They declared that the boy had become deaf and dumb through the effect of some poisonous stuff that had found its way into his constitution. Many medicines were tried, but with no success, and the Prince's condition grew from bad to worse. The physicians gave up his case as hopeless, and declared that his illness was going to prove fatal.

In his grief the king went to his minister and sought his advice as to what to do. The minister comforted him and said, "Do not despond: every misfortune has some redeeming feature, and it may

be that we may catch a ray of hope yet. My daughter-in-law is an adept in astronomy and she is a physician too, and it is quite possible that she may be able to do something for the prince." The King eagerly asked the minister to bring his daughter-in-law at once and show her the prince's condition, for there was no time to lose. The minister went home, and disguising in woman's dress the painter who had been condemned to death and was kept in concealment in his house, seated him in a palanquin and brought him to the palace. He was immediately admitted into the Prince's sick chamber, where the King too was present, but failed to recognise the painter in his skilful disguise. The Prince was lying with his eyes closed, and his face as white as the pillow on which his head rested. After a careful diagnosis, he made a low bow to the King and assured him of his ability to cure the Prince's malady. He prescribed the reading of sacred books before the Prince's face as a cure for his deafness, for he said the affliction had been brought on by some great sin that the Prince had committed in the forest and which it would take a long time to atone for. The King reminded the physician that his patient was totally deaf and would not be able to hear the scriptures. "Do not trouble yourself about that," said the physician, "it will be all right."

Accordingly sacred books began to be read out to the Prince in a loud recitative tone. Shortly afterwards, at a convenient pause in the recital, the disguised physician, addressing the Prince, said, "The

bear in the forest, who had given you a pledge of friendship, saved your life by taking you under his protection, but what an ill return you made to him in trying to shake him down from the tree into the jaws of the hungry lion below! Then that noble beast, the bear, punished you for your treachery, though he spared your life. You forgot at the time that to practise deceit was sinful. Bibhishan, brother of Ravan, King of Ceylon, brought destruction upon his family by treacherously going over to his enemy, Ramchandra, King of Ajodhia."

At these words the Prince's power of hearing returned to him, and with it the power of speech also came back, and he spoke out in a feeble voice, "I can hear a little now, but I am still feeling very weak." He thanked his physician in the warmest manner for having saved his life from an illness the sufferings of which were aggravated by the patient's inability to express them in words. The King was transported beyond measure at his son's recovery, and asked the disguised physician how he had come to know of all that had happened in the forest. The painter replied, "By the same skill with which I had come to know of the Queen's mole, for which your Majesty had condemned me to death."

The King started at these words, and recognising the painter, threw his arms round his neck affectionately and said, "O pardon me my rash cruelty; I was incapable of judging your merits at their true worth. I must not at the same time omit to express my acknowledgments to my worthy Minister

who saved my honour from being stained by the blood of an innocent man, and saved the life of his friend by imperilling his own."

"We are loyal to the very backbone," replied the Minister, "and at the same time we cannot tolerate injustice and oppression which recoil upon the head of the tyrant with terrible vengeance." The king rewarded both the Minister and his friend with high honours.

This was the story to which reference was made in the poem recited before Vikrmaditya by the Pundit. The Raja gave him a handsome reward for reciting before him a poem inculcating such weighty lessons. And this is the end of my story too, and the same lessons may as well be drawn by you as they were by your illustrious predecessor."

The image had hardly finished her tale before Raja Bhoj withdrew from the room. Next morning he appeared again, and was greeted by the sixteenth image, named

Sundermati

who said that Raja Bhoj appeared to her the most unreasonable of men, one so blinded by avarice that he failed to perceive the distinction between right and wrong—the immutable difference between good and evil. Immediately the Raja's circle of courtiers burst out that their king was the greatest, the noblest and the most learned Raja that the world had ever

produced. The image replied, "I am willing to admit this, but you must remember that learning is an external possession that may be acquired by anyone, whereas wisdom is an internal virtue that must be bestowed by Heaven."

The Raja put a stop to this frivolous discussion by calling his courtiers to order, and then the image turned to Raja Bhoj and said, "Upon my faith I tell you that our purpose never was to deceive you but to correct you. For God's sake give up your foolish desire to sit on this throne. The throne belonged to Vikrmaditya than whom a nobler monarch never wore a crown. His virtues make up a tale too long for even a thousand tongues to tell. If you will give me five minutes of your time I shall tell you a story illustrating his generosity." The Raja agreed, and the image began:—

There was in the reign of Raja Vikrmaditya a merchant in Ujjain who was so rich that he literally rolled in wealth and kept up a most expensive and luxurious establishment. He had a son for whose education he had made the very best provision possible, for it was his wish that he should make over the management of his affairs to him as soon as he attained the age of majority. He talked over the matter with his wife who said, "Your son is still too young for the cares of business. You should first give him a share in your counsels, that he may gradually learn to look after the management of his ancestral business, and when you find him fit you may put him in sole charge. There is one more condition which

I think should be fulfilled beforehand, *viz.*, that he should be married before being settled in business."

"Yes, O yes," replied the merchant thoughtfully, "you are quite right; this idea had never struck me before."

The very next day the merchant deputed a Brahman to negotiate his son's marriage in some respectable and wealthy family of his own caste. The Brahman travelled through many a town and city, and visited many a wealthy merchant, but was unable to settle the marriage anywhere owing to some defect or other that was suddenly discovered either in the bride or the bride's father. At last he came to a sea-coast town where he heard of the magnificent mansion and the vast wealth of a certain merchant who resided there. He asked the people by what way he should go to this mansion, and having arrived there he asked the inhabitants of the neighbourhood whether the merchant had a marriageable daughter. They replied that he had a daughter who was both handsome and well-educated, and whom he was anxious to give away in marriage to some suitable match. Satisfied with the result of his inquiries so far, the Brahman sought an interview of the merchant with a view to opening negotiations for his daughter's marriage. He was conducted to a large garden watered by a rippling brook, where a large company of gentlemen were assembled, and in their midst sat the merchant, a tall, grave-looking young man with handsome features and an imposing appearance. Behind him stood a row of attendants eager to

minister to his wants, and ready to carry out his biddings. The Brahman was filled with nervousness at the display of magnificence he beheld there, and made his obeisance to the merchant in a somewhat awkward manner. The merchant asked him who he was and what was his object in coming to see him.

"My lord," replied the Brahman, "I am a Pundit by profession, and I have come here to open negotiations for your daughter's marriage with the son of the world-renowned merchant of Ujjain whose fame must have reached your ears. Your kind consent to this lucky marriage will serve to unite two of the most distinguished families of the country."

The merchant who had been on the look-out for a suitable match for his daughter, made many inquiries regarding the Ujjain merchant, and was convinced that the match was a desirable one in every respect. He gave many presents to the Brahman, deputed one of his own priests to go to Ujjain and see the bridegroom and perform the ceremonies preliminary to the marriage. The two Pundits started on the following morning and reached Ujjain in two weeks. The Pundit sent by the bride's father saw the bridegroom and approved of the match and the preliminaries of the marriage were definitely settled, and an auspicious date, convenient to both parties, settled by mutual consultation.

The preliminaries of the marriage were celebrated with the greatest pomp and splendour. Dancing, music, and banqueting were kept up for full two weeks in the most lavish style, and every one gave himself

up to merriment, apparently regardless of consequences. All this feasting and revelry took place before the marriage itself, and in the riotous mirth which went on from day to day, people had no time to make arrangements for the marriage proper, and the days slipped by one after another, till there were only four days left for the marriage. Now every one was in a hurry. Four days were hardly sufficient even for the journey to the bride's house. The merchant was paralysed and did not know what to do. Much time had been lost in eating and drinking, and it was shameful to ask the bride's father to have the marriage postponed to a later date. Many plans were proposed and discussed, but none seemed to be wholly satisfactory. At last one of the merchant's relatives proposed, "Let us go in a body to Raja Vikrmaditya and request him to lend us his aerial car by travelling in which we can save much time." This proposal was at once hailed with joy, and a deputation immediately waited at the court of Vikrmaditya. But on this particular day the Raja's audience hall was quite empty and on enquiry they learned that the King was suffering from fever and unable to receive any visitor. They therefore hastened to the Prime Minister, and prayed him to forward their petition to the King. The Minister at first evaded their request by saying that he had no privilege to enter the King's chamber without permission, and moreover he did not dare to disturb the King during his illness. But their insistent entreaties filled the Minister's heart with compassion, and he ultimately consented to present the petition

personally to the King, who, as soon as he received it, ordered the Minister to make over the flying chariot to the merchant and to attend to his other wants also. The Minister delivered the flying car to the merchant and asked him if there was anything else he could do for him. The merchant thanked the Minister for his pains and replied that he did not want anything else.

Preparations for the journey to the bride's house were now pressed forward as expeditiously as possible. The bridegroom and his party sat on the flying chariot and reached the bride's house in a few hours, a journey that would otherwise have taken as many days. The bride's father sent several of his officers to receive his guests with becoming respect. They were lodged in a grand and luxuriously furnished house set apart for that purpose. An army of attendants was appointed to attend to their comforts. The two merchants met each other with the utmost friendliness and the guests were entertained with the greatest hospitality.

At night when the auspicious moment arrived, the bride and bridegroom were united to each other by the holy ties of marriage. The congratulations of friends and the blessings of elders and superiors resounded through the hall, as the newly-married couple entered it at the close of the sacred rites. The crowd outside the hall showered benedictions likewise, and called on God to prolong the lives and loves of the newly-wedded pair. The bride, in a *saree* of the loveliest scarlet, looked like a fairy of paradise,

and many a suppressed sigh stifled the bosom of many a love-smitten youth, as he gazed upon the peerless maiden sitting beside her husband in the hall.

The image described the marriage scene with such glowing vividness of detail that all the incidents seemed to be enacted afresh before the eyes of Raja Bhoj and his courtiers. Three days after the marriage, the bridegroom's party, accompanied by the bride, started for Ujjain by the same mode of conveyance as they had used in their forward journey. In the bridegroom's house likewise, mirth and feasting were kept up in full swing for a week after the arrival. But the merchant thought it to be his first duty to return the kind loan of Raja Vikrmaditya, and accompanied it with a present of two lakhs of rupees in cash and three valuable horses. "What is this?" asked Vikrmaditya with a smile, "is this the hire of my flying chariot?" The merchant was abashed and hung down his head with shame. Then the Raja added, "It is my rule not to take back a thing after giving it, and by that rule the chariot has become yours. As for your kind present, I accept it with thanks, but I do hereby make a present of my own to the newly-married couple for their use and enjoyment." So saying he ordered the treasurer to double the amount of the merchant's present, and make it over to the merchant, who made a low bow and left the Raja's presence more in a state of agreeable bewilderment than simple joy."

Here the image ended her story and added, "This is but a common instance of Vikrmaditya's generous

disposition." "Tut, tut," cried Raja Bhoj, "your Vikrmaditya was a prodigal king; what you call his generosity was really reckless dissipation of money, far alike from household thrift and from statesmanlike economy." "You mistake him entirely," replied the statue, "he was a king who was good to all, and hence he was respected by all. His charity was like the summer's rain that sheds joy and fertility upon every part of the earth, upon the field of the good man and the bad man alike. To speak of it as heedless dissipation merely serves to betray your cloven foot." The Raja gave no reply to this, but went away to his own chamber.

Next morning, as usual, Raja Bhoj came to the throne-room, but before he could make known his intention of setting foot on the jewelled throne, the seventeenth image, named

Satimati

burst out into an angry exclamation: "You are a shameless creature upon whom repeated rebuffs have no effect. Your inordinate avarice will make your name a by-word among your contemporaries and after your death yours will be a name of scorn with succeeding generations." Raja Bhoj took no umbrage at this insulting speech, but replied coolly, "To try is the way to succeed: to persevere is the way to win." "It is downright folly to think so," replied the image, "and now methinks such old-world

maxims will land you in a quagmire of troubles one day. My Raja was a saintly king round whose blessed memory many a charming tale and legend has been woven together by the hand of Time. The most cultured minds of the modern world have styled him as ‘the ocean of knowledge and excellence’, and so he really was.” “I do not think,” replied Raja Bhoj sternly, “that he was really half as shining as you represent him.” “Yes,” returned the image, “he was anyhow far superior to you at least. It is no wonder that you speak ill of him so constantly when the only reply you receive from us is a speechless stream of tears. You evidently do not know, or care to acknowledge, that it is a great sin to hurt any one’s feelings. This is absolutely prohibited by our religion which enjoins upon us not to inflict pain even in sport, and forbids us to treat even the meanest insect with wanton cruelty. If you would give me your attention for a few minutes I would tell you a story of Raja Vikrmaditya :—

Raja Vikrmaditya once asked his courtiers who was the ruler of the underground world. “Shesh Nag” was the reply, and on hearing this name the Raja expressed a desire to pay him a visit. So next morning the Raja remembered his demons and ordered them to carry him to the nether world.

According to Hindu mythology, Shesh-Nag is a snake, who is worshipped as a deity and is said to possess a thousand heads and to change himself into human form whenever he likes. Raja Vikrmaditya

soon reached the Snake-god's dominions, and alighting from the demons' shoulders he proceeded on foot to the king's palace, commanding the demons to go away and return when he wanted them next. As Vikrmaditya approached within sight of the Snake-god's palace the building appeared as though on fire, but as he came nearer the illusion began to clear up, and he found that what he had taken for fire was a castle made of solid gold and set with precious stones from which the rays of the sun were reflected in such a manner as to make the structure appear in flames. The king appeared to be a very popular ruler, as he could infer from the fact that every one he met on the street sang praises of him. There was a large gathering at the outer gate of the royal palace, and it was with some difficulty therefore that he could obtain entrance. Arriving at the inner gate he asked the door-keeper to announce to his king the arrival of a Raja who happening to pass through his kingdom desired to have the honour of an audience. He was immediately ushered into the presence of the Snake-king, and after the usual exchange of civilities Vikrmaditya introduced himself as the king of Ujjain, and said that he had come from the upper regions only to have the pleasure of seeing him. Shesh-Nag heartily welcomed him, and catching his hand led him into the palace, and gave him a seat on his throne. The two kings then began to chat with each other in a friendly manner. Vikrmaditya complimented his host by saying that his kindly and benevolent rule had endeared him to his

subjects. Shesh-Nag replied that his guest must have encountered many a trouble and inconvenience on his way to the nether world, and the Raja politely answered that the hospitality of his kind host had made him forget all the hardships of the journey. Vikrmaditya was put up in a magnificent palace, and a host of slaves were appointed to wait upon him. Dinner was served in a beautifully furnished hall, where the two kings met together at the meal, conversing all the while in a light merry style.

In this festive manner the Raja passed three days and three nights at the palace of the Snake-king, and on the fourth day he begged leave to depart. Shesh-Nag said, "Perhaps I have been wanting in my welcome of you, for which reason you are displeased and wish to take an early leave." The Raja replied, "Do not mock me. The truth is that I am on a long tour, and if I stay at one place more than my programme allows, I shall never complete my travels, and it is for this reason that I wish to depart. Besides that, my kingdom is left without a ruler during my absence." Shesh-Nag answered, "Please yourself; but pray accept these four rubies as a humble token of my friendship. One of these will give you as many ornaments as you may choose to ask; from the second you will obtain as much wealth as you desire; the third will procure you innumerable beautiful and costly dresses; and the fourth will prompt you to acts of charity." The Raja accepted the presents with thanks, and after affectionate embraces they parted.

Just after crossing the frontier of Shesh-Nag's kingdom, Vikrmaditya remembered his demons and sitting down again on his magic throne he came back to Ujjain. As was his practice, he alighted outside the city limits, and marched towards the palace on foot. As he was entering the city he met a beggar, who with much fear and trembling, begged him for some help, saying that he found it a great struggle to maintain a large family on the precarious subsistence afforded by private charity. The Raja who had nothing with him except the four rubies presented to him by the Snake-king, offered one of them to the beggar, after describing the miraculous virtues of all, and asked the beggar to take the one that he liked best. The beggar replied that he could not make the selection without consulting his family. "Very well," said the Raja, "go home, and consult your family and then come back to me." "Sir," pleaded the beggar, "how would I be permitted to enter the royal palace?" "Don't be anxious on that account," returned the Raja, "I shall myself keep waiting at this spot until you get back from your house." The beggar was satisfied, and went home with the rubies. Now there were four members in his family, and he sent for them all and showed them the four rubies, describing the magic powers of each one by one, and asked them, which they liked best. But there was a difference of opinion among them, one choosing one, another another, and so on ; and this want of unanimity threw the beggar into a serious perplexity, and taking the four rubies back to the

king, he said, "We are not at one upon the question which of the rubies would be most useful to us : you may yourself make a selection and give me whichever ruby you please." The Raja without a moment's hesitation, gave all the four rubies to the beggar, and returned to the palace.

When her story came to an end, the image turned to Raja Bhoj and said, "Now, tell me if you have seen or heard of anything equal to this princely munificence. Are you not ashamed to stand forth as a rival to Vikrmaditya the unrivalled ?" Raja Bhoj was about to give a reply when he was interrupted by the image who went on to say, " My Raja bestowed wealth in heaps and mounds upon the poor, and never thought much of the gift ; whereas you think twice before flinging a pice at a beggar." Raja Bhoj gave no reply, and perhaps did not quite hear the last words, his mind being occupied with an attempt to discover some way of overcoming this determined opposition.

Next morning he came to the throne-room at an unusually early hour, hoping probably to elude the wary eyes of the guarding images, but the eighteenth image by name

Ruprekha

at once caught him, and with a roguish twinkle in her eyes she first muttered something which he failed to catch, and then spoke out, "Shame, shame, O

Raja, shame upon the griping greed which bars even the doors of sleep ! ” Bhoj was thrown into a violent rage at these words, but the anger was really caused by his shyness being so quickly caught, and not by the insulting language used by Ruprekha, for he had, on former occasions, quietly pocketed much graver insults. “ Are you making fun of me ? ” he exclaimed ; “ the difference you find between me and your Raja is not due to any deficiency in myself but to an error in your own judgment.” The image replied, “ It is a grievous self-delusion to think so. The stories of Vikrmaditya’s exploits which have been carefully recorded by historians and immortalised by bards, are familiar gossip in educated circles. It is an indisputable fact, beyond the possibility of a shadow of doubt, that he was in every respect the best Raja that our country has ever produced. Your eringing courtiers who persuade you to believe yourself a world-renowned monarch, seem to be as blunt of mind as yourself, and are moreover afraid to speak out the truth. Reputation, virtue and happiness greatly depend on the choice of associates, who mould a man’s character in conformity with their own, and make him blest or curst, as the choice may be fortunate or otherwise. You must therefore be very careful in choosing your companions. I am half inclined to suspect that some base fellows have possessed your ears.”

At these words a host of past recollections crowded over the Raja’s mind, and he stood pondering in silence for a while. Upon this the image tried to

cheer him up by saying, "The battle of life is too often fought not with sword and spear, but with patience and perseverance in sorrow and disappointment. Do not be disheartened, I pray you, but hear my story." So saying the image proceeded to tell a story of Raja Vikrmaditya:—

"Once upon a time there broke out a quarrel between two devotees over a matter concerning which they held opposite views. When the dispute waxed warm it was proposed to get it decided by a third party. The two disputants accordingly came to the court of Raja Vikrmaditya and requested him to act as their arbitrator. "For", they said, "you are both a devotee and a king." One of the disputants in stating his case before the Raja, said, "My contention is that wisdom is sovereign in the whole body of man, while the heart merely serves it as an active minister." Then the other party came forward and represented his case thus: "My opinion is diametrically opposed to the one you have just heard. The heart is governor of the whole body, and wisdom acts only as a wise counsellor."

The Raja heard both parties with the closest attention, and then gave his judgment which was as follows:—"The title of sovereignty is due to wisdom, for if the heart takes the command of the body there is fear of every simple action terminating in a fit of madness, and ultimately causing the wreck of the whole machinery. The heart suggests measures and then wisdom, foreseeing the consequences through the medium of knowledge, commands the

heart again to carry out its orders. The heart then communicates the order to the limbs which serve it as subordinates." Addressing the second devotee, he said, "Holy man, your reason seems to be buried under misapprehension. I lean to the side of the first devotee." The first devotee, whose case was decided in his favour, presented a piece of chalk to the Raja and imparted its virtues by saying, "If you draw pictures with this piece of chalk on a wall in the morning, the pictures will turn into beautiful damsels during the night, and then you may enjoy their company pleasantly as long as you like ; but at daybreak the damsels will turn into lifeless images again." The Raja accepted the piece of chalk with thanks, and the devotee went away.

Now the Raja began to spend whole days in making pictures on the walls of his room, and his nights were delightfully passed in the company of these fairy damsels. He was so much interested in this pleasing diversion that a whole month passed away like a day. The queens were sorely distressed at his continued absence from the female apartments, and wondered what offence of theirs had drawn the Raja's mind away from their company. They at last formally petitioned the Raja for a private interview. The Raja granted their request, and they went in to see him at night. Seeing them in depressed spirits, the Raja, forcing a smile on his lips, asked them why they had become so impatient in such a short time. A clever queen among them, seizing her opportunity, promptly replied at once that a woman could not be

happy without her husband. The Raja showed them the piece of magic chalk and explained its properties, and at night gave a demonstration of its powers. Then he handed it over to one of his queens and ordered her to keep it safely as he held great store by it.

The image concluded her speech by saying, "Such was Vikrmaditya, whose glorious throne you covet so much. Now judge for yourself the utter inanity of such a wish—a wish worse than that of a moth to rival a star."

Raja Bhoj was keenly stung by this degrading comparison, but he calmly consumed his anger in silence, and allowed the nineteenth image named

Tara

to begin her speech: "It is indeed strange that your daily disappointments have left in you the heart to entertain a wish that has been blown to tatters so long ago. I am now convinced that some sad mischance is awaiting you at the door. Neither force, nor persuasion, nor entreaty either, has any effect upon your obdurate heart, which seems to be made of some curious unimpressionable stuff, harder than steel or stone. We have tried to show you the futility of your wish by enumerating the noble virtues of Vikrmaditya, and telling nice anecdotes relating to him and his age. Even to-day I resolve upon the same course. I know well that you are proud of your royal riches, and of those crooked ill-digested notions that you

call learning; but nobody has perhaps yet told you that riches are as often the mother of meanness and misery as they are the means of enjoyment and elevation. Pure thoughts and true knowledge alone are worthy. There are numerous stories relating to Vikramaditya's social and political life, all admirably illustrative of the character of that great monarch, for inspite of his multifarious duties he devoted a great part of his time to the cause of social progress, so that in course of time his influence became not only national, but international."

Raja Bhoj replied that he had grown sick of these lengthy dissertations and knew not what to say. But the image unheeding the Raja's remonstrances, proceeded to tell a story about Vikramaditya :—

"One day a learned Pundit was travelling through a forest, where seeing the footprints of a man he at once guessed that they were marks left by a king who had passed barefooted along that path. He followed the track made by the footprints, and after traversing a mile or so, he was exceedingly disappointed to see only a woodcutter hacking at the root of a tree. He asked the man how long he had been there. "A couple of hours," replied the woodcutter, "but pray do not disturb me, as my livelihood depends on this work." The woodcutter then heaved a sigh and lamented over his hard fate, bitterly accusing his destiny that had made it his lot to toil and moil in the forest all day and in the evening buy a penny-worth of food just to keep body and soul together. The Pundit, not satisfied with the woodcutter's first

answer, and still believing that the footprints were those of a king, asked again, "Have you seen some king passing this way?" "What! king?" repeated the surprised woodcutter, "I have not even seen a bird since I came here". The Pundit then asked the woodcutter to show him his feet, which he did without hesitation, not so much to oblige the meddlesome Pundit, as to get rid of him quickly. The Pundit on examining his feet said to himself, "His footmarks signify greatness, but I wonder why he is so poor." Then turning to the woodcutter he again asked, "Where do you live, and how long have you been a woodcutter ?" The astonished woodcutter replied that he had been engaged in that occupation since he was a boy. "How can you bear to toil so hard daily?" asked the Pundit sympathetically, and the only reply was that what was lotted could not be blotted.

The Pundit then determined to go to Raja Vikrmaditya and examine his feet, for he had read in his astrological books that whoever had footmarks like those of the woodcutter was destined to be a king. He thought that if the Raja's footmarks were similar, he would conclude that it was by some evil chance that the woodcutter had fallen into that adversity and that he might one day be a king in sooth. If on the contrary the Raja's footmarks were different he would burn his books and turn a recluse for the rest of his life. With this determination the perplexed Pundit proceeded towards Ujjain and arrived there in due course. He saw a great crowd at the gate of the royal palace, and from a safe distance he

tried to draw the attention of the door-keeper, but being too far he failed to attract his notice. Fighting his way through the throng of eager expectants, he was able to come up to the sentinel, and requested him to inform the Raja of the arrival of a learned scholar who was anxious for an audience. "No permission is needed in the case of men of learning," said the door-keeper, "they can go in at any time they like." The Pundit accordingly went in and found the Raja sitting on his throne surrounded by the State officials of high rank. The Raja welcomed him and after asking him to take his seat he enquired the object of his visit. The Pundit replied, "Pardon my insolence if I ask you kindly to show me your feet." "Oh, most gladly," said Vikramaditya, stretching his feet at the same time. The Pundit was much confused to see the Raja's footmarks of a different stamp from the woodcutter's. He felt the earth beneath him to be spinning round and round, and he was on the point of fainting when with a mighty effort of the will he recovered control over himself and resumed his seat, buried in thought. "What ails you?" asked the Raja; "let me know all." "Sire," returned the Pundit, "I made a special study of the science of footmarks for twelve long years, and now I find that all my labour has been in vain. I have therefore determined to leave the world and live in the solitude of a forest, and this is what has made me so sad. I saw the marks of royalty on the feet of a humble woodcutter more clearly traced than on your own. But you are a powerful king,

whereas this other is so poor that he earns a precarious living by cutting wood and selling it in the town. This is a mystery of which my science has failed to offer a solution."

Vikrmaditya replied, "Do not accuse your science for an error for which you yourself are responsible. You must know that there are *latent* footmarks as well as *patent* ones." But the sceptical Pundit rejoined, "Not until I have obtained satisfactory evidence of this will I believe it to be true." Thereupon the Raja ordered a knife to be brought, and with it he tore off the skin covering the sole of his feet, and showed him the hidden marks under the outer skin. The Pundit stood aghast, unable to move or to speak for some time. Then when his confusion permitted him to speak, he said, "Sir, I never knew you were a gifted astrologer also. Truly you have attained the summit of perfection in every science known under the sun." And he gave up his idea of retiring into the jungle.

Having finished her tale, Tara again appealed to Raja Bhoj praying him to think once more of his intrinsic worth and to give up his mad wish of sitting on the throne of Vikrmaditya. She added in a hortative tone, "You must act in such a manner as may raise you in the estimation of the world. The doctrine of *noblesse oblige* applies more strictly to kings than to any of his subjects. Peace, truth, love, and justice are the four legs of a sovereign's throne." Raja Bhoj did not like this preaching, and muttering something in his lips he left the place.

On the following morning the twentieth image named

Chandra Jyoti

received Raja Bhoj with befitting courtesy, and the king was delighted with this reception, thinking that his tricks had at last succeeded. But the very next sentence spoken by the image dispelled that hope and turned the delight into rage. The Raja literally trembled with anger as the image asked him to renounce his project of sitting on the throne and to set his fears and fancies at rest. He shouted at the top of his voice and screamed, "I will put my will into effect by force, and hurl your defiance in your teeth."

The image sat quite mute until the Raja's passion subsided, and then seizing a favourable opportunity she began in a tone of reconciliation, "There is no occasion here for this heated outburst : my purpose is not to thwart you, but to offer friendly advice. A desire that overflows the heart, maddens the brain and proves a canker for the mind. For remember it is the mind that maketh good or ill, wretched or happy, rich or poor. Remember also that hope never dies : it has the most tenacious vitality of all human emotions, and it is an egregious folly to follow its impulses as blindly as you have been doing."

With this didactic preface she proceeded to tell a story of Raja Vikrmaditya :—

Once upon a time the Raja held a great festival to which he invited all the kings of the earth, as well

as all the gods of heaven, and Ujjain presented a scene of magnificence unparalleled in the history of its existence. Such a gathering of terrestrial and celestial magnates had never before taken place at any spot on earth. The only absentee was the Moon-god, and even this solitary case of absence made Vikrmaditya somewhat uneasy. So remembering his faithful demons he mounted his aerial throne, and ascended towards the sky, and having reached the region of the Moon, solicited an audience of the god, which was cheerfully granted. The Raja flung himself at the god's feet, and in the politest speech asked him the cause of his absence. The Moon requested the Raja to rise, and clasping him to his bosom said, "Believe me, the only reason of my absenting myself from your brilliant gathering is that if I were to go the whole earth would become dark. Accept my sincerest professions of love and friendship, and go and attend to your distinguished guests." He gave the Raja the water of immortality as a present, and the Raja thankfully accepting it said that he wished for nothing except the continuance of the god's kind favour, and prostrating himself once more at his feet, he withdrew from his presence. The Moon-god did him the honour of conducting him up to the castle gate, where the two embraced each other affectionately and parted.

On his way back to earth Vikrmaditya chanced to meet the Angel of Death, of whom he enquired whither he had gone. The Angel replied haughtily that he had gone to Ujjain to appropriate the life of a

Brahman. The Raja said, "Pray give me the pleasure of your company for a while, and take me to the house of this deceased Brahman, whom I very much wish to see, for without you I shall not be able to find him, as Ujjain is a thickly-populated city." The Angel was at first unwilling to turn back, but knowing that he was Raja Vikrmadittya said, "Well, for your sake I am ready to meet your wishes." The two accordingly came down to Ujjain and hurried to the house of the dead Brahman, who, the Raja was very much grieved to find, was one of his own priests. The Raja sprinkled a few drops of the water of immortality upon his mouth, and the dead man was immediately restored to life, and was astonished on opening his eyes, to see the figure of Raja Vikrmadittya standing before him. This miracle performed by the Raja dumb-founded the Angel of Death, who had to return home empty-handed."

Thus ended the tale of the twentieth image who, on finishing her story, drew the following moral out of it:—"Know then, superiority is due to wisdom, not to age, and generosity has its root in the heart, not in the purse. Mere empty bragging does not lift a man's dignity by one inch. It is as true as I live that no human being can be compared with Raja Vikrmadittya. If you doubt this you may consult public opinion on the subject and resolve your doubt. Go home, and never come here again to press your wish." Raja Bhoj hung down his head in shame and went away.

But next morning he forgot everything in his

eager desire to sit on the jewelled throne, and he made his appearance in the throne-room at the accustomed hour. He was met by the twenty-first image named

Anurodhmati

who first scanned him from head to foot and then said, "Your daily visits to this place with the self-same result furnishes to us much matter for innocent fun. Do not take it ill if each time you meet with the same cold reception from us, and hear from our lips the same praises of our Raja from day to day. For Vikrmaditya's virtues can make up a tale of endless length, and the story would still be far from complete even if each of the thirty-two images that surround this throne should repeat thirty-two tales a day for thirty-two years consecutively."

Raja Bhoj replied, "My one aim is to gain my object of sitting on this historic throne, and no word of yours can change my mind, try as long or as hard as you may." The image rejoined, "It is really inexplicable that although we have tried so often to illumine the darkness of your ignorance it should still continue as thick as ever. Know you that ignorance is the worst curse that can fall to the lot of man, whereas healthy knowledge smooths the path of progress and leads to a bright future. Your strong obstinacy is an unmistakable symptom of the darkest ignorance, and it needs no exceptional intelligence

to prophesy that it will plunge you into a hideous pit one day."

"Well, I shall see," replied Raja Bhoj wrathfully, and in that heat of passion he took a sudden leap and sprang upon the throne, heedless of all consequences. But the moment he did so, he was stuck fast on the seat, and unable to extricate himself. Finding himself in this sad strait he burst into tears, and prayed the image to tell him some means of disentangling himself from this perilous position. The image replied, "Before I devise a plan to set you free, we must come to a solution of the question of superiority between yourself and Raja Vikramaditya that has formed the subject of debate between us so long."

The Raja wept afresh and poured out many a prayer and entreaty to the image to release him from the cruel bondage he was in. The image took pity on him and said that all he had got to do to loosen himself from the iron grip of the throne was to meditate upon the glories of Vikramaditya, and Raja Bhoj was obliged to do the very thing he had even refused to listen from others. And when he stood forth free from his bondage the image again addressed him in the following words:—"Sir, be pleased to remember that facts cannot tell a lie. Your highest ambition is to be known as a king who has outstripped Vikramaditya, and indeed in your heart of hearts you believe you have already won that position, but the stern logic of facts laughs such hollow pretensions in the face. In point of the

outward paraphernalia of sovereignty you may be a king as great as Vikrmaditya, but in point of character there can be no comparison between the two. Let me tell you a story that will show how laboriously and zealously Vikrmaditya worked in the cause of suffering humanity :—

Once upon a time there was a young and accomplished Brahman, named Madho, who was well-versed in every science and art professed in his time. He was also so handsome that, as the poet says, the sun himself looked pale before the beauty of his glorious face. Whenever he passed through a street a crowd of women followed his heels, with no other object than to feast their eyes with the beauty of his charming face. He could sing songs to the accompaniment of music so skilfully that his performances were regarded as unapproachable in excellence. Those who had seen his beauty and also heard him sing could hardly believe their eyes and ears. Not only were his songs sweet-toned in voice, but also perfectly accurate in time and tune. His songs enraptured the audience in such a degree that it seemed literally to be a case of witchery and enchantment. Nature had at his very birth lavished her bounties on him, but when he opened his lips and performed his musical feats, no heart so cold and stoic but was stirred to its innermost depths to hear him. Every man who had eyes to see and a heart to feel and to appreciate beauty, was simply lost in astonishment. He was in short a miracle of beauty and accomplishment, a rare union of nature and art.

Madho was in fact the pride and praise of his race, but he was rather unfortunate in his worldly career. For as soon as he entered the service of any king he quickly rose to distinction and glory, and won the esteem of the public, but soon it so happened that a number of ladies fell in love with him, and this aroused mutual jealousy and recrimination to such an extent that he soon became a centre of plots and conspiracies and was finally obliged to abandon his position at the court, until, after a succession of such reverses of fortune, he eventually turned into a recluse and quitted the world and its preferments altogether.

In this character, persecuted by ill-fortune and stricken with grief, he started on a pilgrimage to visit the shrines of India. Year chased year, and no news of him was heard, until after many long wanderings his heart yearned to return to his native country and to be once more among old friends. The recollection of his home came so strongly upon the mind of this self-driven exile that it made him feel very uneasy, and he accordingly hastened his steps homewards, and tramped many a weary mile to reach his native place. After a year's toilsome journey he reached Kamnagar where he intended to halt a few days. In the evening he went to pay his respects to the Raja of the place, but was not allowed to enter the royal palace. So he sat at the gate and began to devise a plan of gaining entrance. While he sat outside he heard the sound of music and dancing proceeding from within the castle, and on inquiry he learned that these rejoicings were held in

celebration of the marriage of the Raja's son. He heard the music for some time and then could not help muttering, "Both the Raja and his company of merry-makers are fools." He repeated these words twice or thrice, until they caught the ears of the doorkeeper, who hearing this treason uttered against his master and afraid to take the law into his own hands, went in and reported to the Raja that a wretched-looking stranger at the gate was reviling His Majesty in the foulest language. The Raja ordered an enquiry, in answer to which Madho said, "There are two rows of musicians in the dancing hall, facing east, and they are playing on drums. One of the drummers has no thumb, but has got a false one made of wax."

The doorkeeper first expressed his disbelief and then asked, "How did you come to know this? Tell me now what I am to report to the king. I am too old to be running to and fro, bearing messages constantly." Madho replied, "I have no wish to fight with you, but I shall be very thankful if you kindly take the trouble of going to the king and delivering the above message to him."

The Raja, receiving this strange message, ordered one of his courtiers to examine the musician's thumb, and it was found that it was really made of wax, as had been reported to him. He was much struck at the accuracy of the stranger's conjecture, and summoning him into the hall, he offered him a seat near the throne. "What is your name," asked the Raja eagerly, "and whence are you coming?" "Sir,"

replied the stranger, "my name is Madho, and I have come here from a distant country." The Raja paused a little and asked again, "Are you the Madho I have often heard about? I daresay you can sing and play in a masterly style." "I cannot presume to say so," replied Madho modestly; "I used indeed to play and sing formerly, but since I put on the habit of a recluse I have not hummed a tune." "Can you play and sing as before?" asked the Raja. Madho replied, "After some practice I hope my skill will come back to me."

The Raja ordered his chamberlain to give Madho a decent robe, and with that on, he came again to the hall and resumed his seat. Now there was a famous dancing girl in the court named Kam Kandhla, not one of those mercenary ones who have degraded the once honoured profession, but a maiden of unblemished character and of such dazzling beauty that no one could look her in the face. She was indeed the glory of her profession and a transcendent luminary in the heavens of loveliness. The Raja sent for her and asked her to give a demonstration of her skill in the presence of this expert in music. At the very first glance they exchanged, the two were smitten by the darts of love, each, however, unconscious of the other's feelings. Kam-Kandhla, knowing she was required to sing in the presence of one for whom she felt a peculiar tenderness, adorned her person with the greatest care, and her artificial embellishments only set off her superior natural charms. Thus decked, she came into the hall to grace the dancing party.

Her nimble steps as she danced, instead of beating the floor, seemed to tread upon the hearts of the spectators, and her turns and twists tortured the beholders out of themselves. While she was thus exhibiting her best skill, a wasp flew down and sat upon her breast, and began to sting her. "If I try to drive it away," she thought to herself, "my performance will be marred before the best judge of the art, and yet the pain is rather unbearable." In this dilemma she heaved a deep sigh and threw out her breath from the holes of her breast, which made the wasp fly away at once. Madho, who was closely watching her, suddenly cried out in a loud voice, "Bravo! Excellent! I cannot praise you too highly. I have travelled through the whole world, but have never seen a maiden half so perfect in beauty and skill as you. O delight of my heart! I have nothing in hand to present to you, except my heart! But what am I saying? My heart became yours the first moment I beheld you. The Raja has given me some robes and jewels—things quite unworthy of your notice, and these I present to you, and pray that you will accept them." So saying he put off his robes and jewels and flung them before the dancing girl in an ecstasy of rapture.

The Raja and his ministers were greatly surprised to see this sudden outburst of joy on the part of Madho, and were at the same time highly displeased with his unbecoming conduct in giving away his robes and jewels to a dancing girl in the employ of the King. The Raja demanded an explanation from Madho

who in exculpation of his guilt, related the whole story of the wasp which he had watched, and ended by saying that he had not seen a single other person possessing that extraordinary skill of exhaling breath out of the breast. "Do you want to surpass me in princely generosity?" demanded the Raja angrily; "you doubtless know that it is not right for a man to show himself higher than his position warrants. Your conduct merits punishment."

"Sir," expostulated Madho humbly, "I hope I can pardonably presume that I am a master in this art of music and dancing, and being an adept, can claim to be a better judge than yourself. But fortune has made you a King and left me miserably poor. I have not done any wrong to merit Your Majesty's displeasure, but am prepared to suffer whatever fate may be in store for me. You have accused me of being generous beyond what my position warrants, but let me ask how I can show even a grain of generosity when I have not even the means to keep my body and soul together. I strongly suspect that false calumnies against me have been poured into your ears by your envious ministers whose words you are accustomed to regard like an oracle."

"You do not confess your guilt?" asked the Raja with a frown on his brows; "then take the consequences. Leave my kingdom within an hour, for if I see your face again, I will have you drowned." "Worshipful Sir," pleaded Madho, "I still protest that I am innocent," and with that he heaved a deep sigh and casting up his eyes towards Heaven he moaned,

"O God, why has this divine retribution visited my guiltless head? O where is Thy mercy? Was I not already an exile from home, and must I now be an exile from happiness as well? And yet I do not want to stay at this place either, for it is a place where shameless injustice passes for virtue."

With this parting shot he bade farewell to the court of Kamnagar, and issuing out of the palace gates wandered hither and thither through the city like one walking in sleep. But at last wearied out he sat down under a tree with his head resting on his knees. Tears were fast flowing down his cheeks, and he was mumbling and muttering to himself, "Ah, how can I venture to stay longer at a place I have been commanded to quit within an hour? And yet how can I leave this place without meeting Kam Kandhla once more? I know that death awaits me close at hand, but to go without seeing her is no better than death. My faculties have already deserted me, but love rules over me more strongly than ever. I have not fallen in love of my own accord,—who ever did so? I am a helpless victim in the hands of love, and let him do what he wills. If I die at this moment—and I wish I could—the desire of seeing my beloved Kam Kandhla would still survive in my heart, and my eyes will be streaming with tears even when they are lying closed in the grave."

Meanwhile Kam Kandhla who had witnessed the scene of Madho's expulsion, left the Raja's presence pretending sudden sickness. Coming home she sent one of her servants to fetch Madho to her house.

Madho came, and as soon as the eyes of the two lovers met, patience was lost, the senses became dormant, the reins of discretion dropped from their hands, love triumphed supreme, and they ran into each other's arms with a warmth that genuine passion alone could inspire. She begged him to dry up his tears, but he was unable to arrest their flow for some time, although he was now in the presence of that very Kam Kandhla who was provoking them. When the first flush of emotion was past, he wiped his eyes and fell into conversation with her. The topic of course was love. "The Raja has ordered me to quit his kingdom within an hour," said Madho sorrowfully, "and you have transgressed the law by harbouring an offender. Secrets are dangerous things to keep. If my concealment leaks out—as who can say it will not—I have nothing new to fear: I am already a condemned man. It is you, my darling, that I am most concerned about. Heaven forbid that I should be the cause of hurting even a hair of your head. Let me entreat you, therefore, do not bid me stay."

"Dearest," replied Kam Kandhla spiritedly, "why do you give way to gloomy forebodings? My love for you is so strong that I cannot keep it within bounds: it must needs transgress the limits of law and liberty alike. Come what may, I cannot leave you. You are my life and soul, and life itself is impossible without you. What a potent spell you have cast over me that you should gain such complete ascendancy over me in a few minutes! Indeed, I feel myself a part of you. Do not grieve for what

may befall me : I am prepared for the very worst. Meanwhile, as long as I have the power, let me try to make you forget your woes, for your dejected face causes me more grief than the threat of the worst torture."

Thereupon she took up a guitar and sang a song to the accompaniment of it—a song that enraptured her lover's heart more deeply than it had been tormented by the sentence of banishment. After a brief pause she caught his hand and led him to where supper was already served. When they had refreshed themselves, she got up and threw her arms round his neck affectionately and said, "Dearest, when I have become yours, and you have become mine, how can you leave me behind ? "

"Oh sensitive soul!" he replied, "cheer up; the world is as much full of gleam as of gloom. Let us not talk of the gloom, but of the gleam." "I should be very pleased," she answered with a sigh, "indeed, I am very anxious to follow your teaching, but being a novice I cannot control my love; I am afraid I cannot do it even in the faintest degree. Do not, I beseech you, leave me here to perish alone. Wherever you may go, take me with you." "Oh, how can I refuse, and yet how can I grant what you have asked?" Then after a pause he added, "Willing or unwilling, I am obliged to obey the harsh command of your unjust Raja, and if you press me, I will stay here at the risk of my life." "Oh, how can I do that?" she replied; "if you are in safety, far though it may be from me, I may hope to see you again.—

But the night has far advanced, and I beg you to take some rest."

So she conducted him to her bedchamber and laid him in her bed. But the trouble in his mind had banished sleep from the eyes, and when at midnight he found a dead silence pervading the city, he said, "Now this great city is lying hushed in sleep, and I can leave this place without being noticed by any one." "Will you really leave me to my fate?" she asked in a tone of the deepest anguish; "then pray stay at least till dawn."

"That will only make matters worse for me," he said with a laugh, "however, since you desire it, I will trust to chance and stay for another day." "How can I bear to part from you as long as life remains in me?" said Kam Kandhla in a tremulous voice; "O that I were free from all earthly bonds at the time of separation from you! How my heart shivers into a thousand fragments at the mention of the word '*separation*.' Ah, how terrible must be the *act* of separation then!" Madho silenced her ejaculations by saying "Are you still harping on the same string?"

Then they both laid themselves down to take rest, but the deep agitation within their breast had shut off the gates of sleep, and the whole night passed in silent broodings over the morrow. The light of dawn as it streamed into the room, merely intensified the palpitation of their hearts, and when the cheerless sun peeped above the horizon, she started up from her bed and said, "I have no heart to leave you. But

the Raja's command which fell upon me like a thunderbolt, must be obeyed for the sake of your safety." Then she began to vilify the Raja in the grossest language, and then burst into tears and exclaimed, "Do not cease to love me when you are away. Love me half as much as I love you, and you shall be the most ardent lover in the world. It may be all superstition, but the pang of parting has riven my heart, and now nothing can solace me except your sweet presence."

"But that is impossible—quite impossible, I think. Every minute will increase the distance between us, and I wonder if our hearts will ever be separate—the two hearts which love has fused into one," said Madho, his eyes gushing with tears. She replied in a tone full of tenderness and sorrow, "Yes, our hearts will ever remain united by the indissoluble bonds of love, however apart our bodies may be thrown from each other by the cruel mandate of the king. Once more I beg of you to come back to me as speedily as possible,—in a month,—in a week,—in a day, if you can, for if you delay, you will find me dead when you return. It is my last request, my fondest desire that you may never forget me, as I on my part will never be tempted by the joys of the world to forget you for one moment." Then after a pause she added, "Dearest and best beloved, am I destined to be miserable? My heart is burning with love for you. In your absence I shall drag a weary existence. Since the moment I saw you and up to the present, I deemed myself as happy as mortal can be: God only knows

what my future will be." And she burst again into a flood of tears.

Madho made answer, "My heart comes to my mouth to see you weeping and wailing in this manner. When I have once lain my heart at your feet, I have no other left to bestow upon another." With this he bade farewell to his Kam Kandhla, and stepped out of the room, leaving her bathed in a downpour of tears. As soon as Madho was out of sight, she fainted, and her attendants ran to her help, but for some time their attempts to bring her back to herself were of no avail. When at last she opened her eyes she saw two slave-girls waiting at her side. Not caring who they were or why they were there, she heaved a deep sigh and muttered, "O my Lord, where have you gone, leaving me plunged in an ocean of misery and affliction? But you too must be in the same plight, and I am the unhappy cause of all your sufferings. I can only pray that God may prosper you, and seek some negative solace in the belief that He will not be deaf to a woman's prayers. Why did you not kill me before parting, so that I could have escaped from this crushing calamity? Why did you ever love me at all? Why did I ever give away my heart unto you? Is it that absence makes the heart grow fonder? O for the life-bestowing elixir of your kisses! O my sweet one, I cannot rest without seeing you. Do come, and forget everything else, and take me in your arms and assuage my grief. Never before in my life did I feel so wretched, so disconsolate. Oh, have mercy, have pity on me! If you only come and kiss

your beloved once, she will forget every pain, and be your own loving one for ever. Do come, do come, before I am completely gone. The happy time we spent together—ah! it is still a delusion, a dream from which I now awake. I pray thee, O God, take me away into Thy holy presence. Why dost Thou tarry in granting my prayer when he has left me who is all in all to me? What wilt thou answer, God, when on the Day of Judgment I shall demand justice of Thee, saying that Thou hast been the cause of my death, and that I perished of a broken heart?"

She again shed a profusion of tears. Her attendants tried to beguile her by asking her to sing and play on the guitar, her favourite instrument, but she only replied, "My mind now disowns that very art which once occupied every nook and corner of it. Leave me to myself, kind friends, and do your own work."

Night and day they tried to divert her mind by all the means in their power, but nothing seemed to touch even the fringe of her mind. The more they tried to reason with her, the more disconsolate she grew; the more they tried to extinguish the flame of her love the brighter it blazed, until it threatened to consume her heart completely. The maid-servants, in obedience to orders, quitted the room, and she was again left alone to brood over her sorrow. She gave up meat and drink altogether, and as a result grew so weak that she had not strength enough to turn in bed from one side to the other. Her eyes sank deep in their sockets, and

she had nothing but a gaunt skeleton ready to be dropped into the grave.

Her mother engaged the best physicians to attend her, but medical skill was of little avail in an ailment of the heart. They at last declared to her mother that love had burrowed too deep into her heart for feeble physic to cure her malady. It was the sight of her lover again which could restore her to life.

Meanwhile Madho hastening forth from the city went into a jungle, where he sat down under a tree and began to brood sorrowfully over his fate. But when the rays of the sun began to beat hard upon his head he started up and proceeded in one direction, not knowing whither he was going or where the path would lead him. Just at nightfall he penetrated the depths of a second forest, and continued his march until eventually it became so dark that he could not see his way. He was therefore forced to stop and lay himself down on a bed of dry leaves, exposed to the tender mercies of wild beasts. For some time he kept tossing to and fro on his leafy bed, but being overpowered by hunger and fatigue, he fell asleep. When he opened his eyes he found, instead of his Kam Kandhla, a heap of forest leaves, in his arms. His heart beat fast: his eyes moistened with tears, and he cried aloud with a sigh, "O God, let no one suffer the pangs of separation as I do. It is more trying and troublesome than all the other woes of the world put together. My days and my nights are passed in sighs and tears, and one lovely thought is continually haunting me."

At last he rose up from the ground and resumed his wandering through the forest. On the way he met a stranger who asked him why he looked so miserable and oppressed. "I thank you for your kind inquiry," replied Madho, "but I do not want to trouble you with an account of my misfortunes, which is sure to cause you pain. Let silence therefore meditate the matter in secrecy." The stranger insisted, saying that he might be able to be of some service, and then Madho began: "I thank you sincerely for your kind offers of assistance, but my malady is past human aid, and it is superfluous therefore to describe it to any one." The stranger was a bit displeased, and replied, "Well then, what cannot be cured must be endured." Madho said that he was going to address a letter to Raja Vikrmaditya, giving a full account of his misfortunes, as he had heard that Vikrmaditya was a philanthropic king and would in all probability help him.

The stranger, on hearing this, laughed a scornful laugh and said that it was an unheard-of thing that a poor man should be in correspondence with a great king. "Not so," replied Madho, "for kings are born not to repose on the couch of luxury, but to redress the wrongs of those who are in misery and distress."

So Madho took his way to Ujjain which he reached after two days' weary march. He met an inhabitant and asked him what time he should apply for an audience with the Raja, as he had to tell him something in private. The inhabitant answered,

"If you want to say something concerning the state, you can see him at any time you like, but if you are in distress, and seek his assistance, I should advise you to go out of the city and sit down at the door of the temple and wait for the Raja's arrival there. The Raja visits the temple daily in the evening."

"How shall I be able," asked Madho anxiously, "to find time for giving him a detailed history of my misfortunes?" "Do not be anxious for that," replied the other, "he always takes much interest in hearing tales of distress." Madho then asked where the temple was situated and how far it was from that place. The citizen replied, "I'll tell you that by and by. But first you must come in and refresh yourself." And he took Madho to his house and gave him refreshments and then said, "You must know that Raja Vikrmaditya possesses the princely quality of mercy: mercy is in him like an inborn instinct. He is at the same time an astute statesman and a wise administrator. No tongue, however eloquent, can praise his virtues in adequate terms. Even professional beggars and pretended mendicants share his unstinted charity, for he never cares to enquire whether the case is one of real hardship or otherwise. And yet in private life he is as abstemious as an anchorite."

"I can well conceive," replied Madho, "what like your Raja must be, when his people are so kindhearted and courteous." He then took his way to the temple as directed by his friend, and bade goodbye to his kind host with the following words:—"I

can give you nothing in token of my deep obligations for your kind hospitality : I am a Brahman—take my blessings and be happy."

On reaching the temple Madho found it to be more like a fortified tower than a place of worship. He sat down at the entrance, patiently waiting for the Raja's arrival. Being alone, he soon found his melancholy thoughts returning upon him in full force. In the evening he saw a grand procession headed by the Raja, coming slowly towards the temple. At first he felt happy, but his joy was quickly damped as he thought of the difficulty of gaining access to the Raja and giving him a full account of his misfortunes. He was thus lost in the mazes of thought when the Raja dismounting at the temple steps, went in, worshipped the image of the god placed there, and came out holding a lotus flower in his hand,—all unobserved by him. He woke from his reverie as the king was coming out of the temple, but he could not muster courage to approach him or to utter a single word. The Raja, however, noticed him sitting with his head between his knees, and questioned, "Who are you? Whence have you come? What ails you? Tell me all without reserve." For his miserable condition could not fail to catch the eye of one whose gospel it was to relieve human misery, whose life had been dedicated to the service of the poor. Madho gave no reply, but his eyes gave answer enough. The Raja guessed that the man was in sorrow, but that he did not want to solicit aid openly, or probably his grief was of a

private nature, or perhaps he needed further encouragement. So he said, "Be comforted; do not fear to tell me everything."

Madho felt encouraged at these words and sobbed forth, "Help, help your majesty ! I beseech you, help a fallen man !" "What do you want?" asked the Raja sympathetically; "your miserable condition shall not go unnoticed by me. Come to my house, and let me hear your story at my leisure." The Raja ordered one of his attendants to take him on the back of an elephant and to conduct him directly to the palace, while he himself mounted his horse and galloped ahead, and reaching the palace ordered the lord chamberlain to put the stranger up in a comfortable room and to appoint two or three slaves to wait upon him. At night when the Raja found leisure from his state duties he sent for Madho, and asked him to tell his whole story. He did so from the beginning to the end, and concluded by an appeal for aid and assistance. He had hardly finished the last sentence when he fell down senseless on the ground. The attendants sprinkled rose-water on his face and fanned him gently for a long time, but still he showed no signs of returning animation. The Raja then got down from his seat and whispered in his ears, "Get up: Kam Kandhla is very uneasy to see you lying motionless and still." These words acted like magic, and he opend his eyes at once and the Raja assured him again that he would do all in his power to help him. "Honoured Sir," said Madho, "let your kingly aid come soon, or it will come too late. To

live with her, to have her ever before my eyes, can alone save my life." The Raja comforted him again, told him to take some rest, and promised to take measures of redress next day.

Next morning when Madho reappeared in the royal hall, Vikrmaditya asked him, "How do you feel now? I hope you fared well during the night." "Sir," replied he boldly, "no lover in separation can fare well for one moment." The Raja appointed a couple of jesters to divert Madho, but court-buffoonery was but a feeble appliance to cure the wounds of love. In the evening a grand dancing-party was by proclamation held in the royal palace, and the Raja in full state attended the function. Madho was asked to take a seat next the dais-throne. When all were seated in their places, the dancing girls were ordered in and singing and dancing commenced. One of the dancers was a maiden of twenty, glowing like the moon of paradise in the full splendour of youthful beauty. Her singing too was melodious to a fault. All eyes were turned on her with admiration as she performed her graceful movements. After watching her dancing for a while the Raja turned towards Madho and said, "Well, have you seen this maiden? Is she not of uncommon beauty? I had ordered her parents to lock up this treasure from the vulgar gaze since she was a mere child of six, for in the very bud I could foresee the perfect rose. She has been reared with every possible care, and she is, I think, a fit match for your Kam Kandhla. I recommend her to you in place of your Kam Kandhla." "I beseech your forgiveness

for the freedom," said Madho firmly, "but I wonder that anybody should weigh a straw against a lump of the purest gold." His eyes filled with tears at the recollection of his sweetheart, but he could not help adding one more observation that the maid-servants of Kam Kandhla were prettier than this vaunted beauty. Then the Raja found that his passion was not the fleeting fancy of a fickle brain but that divine feeling which dwells in the human heart as a symbol of eternity. Just before midnight the Raja left the dancing hall and retired to his bed chamber. Madho also came back to his apartment and flung himself on what was now no better than a bed of suffering.

Next morning the Raja visited him in his own apartment and said, "You are a Brahman, are you not? It is strange that you should have fallen in love with a dancing girl." Madho thought it useless to expostulate with the Raja and convince him that Kam Kandhla was no common dancing-girl as he thought, but a maiden as pure-minded, and as pure-handed as any of his own queens. All that he said in answer to the Raja's remarks was, "The path of love runs a wild and erratic course, beset with all kinds of danger. I tried to tread upon this path as lightly and as warily as I could, but with what result? My life already stands forfeited to the law, and now I beseech you not to think of my love but to rid me of my sufferings by ridding me of my life."

Seeing him so desperately in love, the Raja ordered his Commander-in-chief to move an expedition against Kamnagar. The news of an intended

campaign led many a neighbouring Raja and vassal chief to proffer aid and assistance and to be allowed the honour and glory of arraying his forces under the victorious banner of Vikrmaditya. The Raja thanked them for their offers and intimated that they would be communicated with in case their services should be deemed necessary.

On the succeeding morning the war drum beat to muster, and many a gallant troop of warriors assembled in the great square in front of the palace. The Raja himself reviewed the forces, and then personally took the command. The departure of the troops was announced by the firing of guns and the braying of trumpets. Madho also accompanied the expedition on the back of an elephant. The glitter of arms, the brilliancy of the military uniforms, the rich trappings of the horses and elephants, made the expedition look more like a triumphal procession than a punitive campaign. After a week's march the army arrived on the confines of Kamnagar where an encampment was ordered. The same night Madho begged permission to visit Kam Kandhla, acting on the assurance in his heart that in case of arrest the Raja's forces were at hand to rescue him. Moreover the night was very dark, and to thicken the darkness a dense fog was hanging on the city and hiding everything in its sable shroud. "I wouldn't advise you to run the risk of your life," said the Raja, "for you might be caught by the guards and killed before help can reach you."

Before declaring hostilities, Vikrmaditya decided

to open friendly negotiations by sending a messenger to the Raja of Kamnagar, demanding the surrender of the dancing-girl Kam Kandhla, or if that were not complied with, to prepare for war. The messenger was returned with the answer that Vikrmaditya's tricks would have no effect on his enemy as long as he was commander of thousands of brave warriors. The envoy was also asked to tell his Raja to prepare for war,—“I have arms ready at hand to give him a warm reception. The thirsty swords of my soldiers will now have an opportunity of drinking their fill. Tell him, that I will carry on the war to the knife.”

The messenger came back and delivered the enemy's message word for word to Raja Vikrmaditya, and also a formal letter of challenge which was severely worded. There was now nothing for it but instant fighting. Vikrmaditya gave orders to his troops to bombard the city, and the report of guns that announced the cannonade was heard by the enemy with fear and trembling. After three days' incessant fighting, the city was captured, and the Raja brought in chains to the conqueror's camp. Raja Vikrmaditya pressed him into his arms and gave him a place on his throne beside himself, and then said, “You must learn one valuable lesson from this war, that pride is the first step on the road to ruin, while injustice is the mother of infamy.” The Raja of Kamnagar listened with courtesy and then humbly replied, “It was never my intention to cross swords with your imperial majesty, but I suffered all this

bloodshed only to find a chance of paying my homage to you in person." And he followed this up with a few well-chosen and happily-worded compliments, which made such an impression on the mind of Vikrmaditya that he gave back his kingdom to the Raja and entered into an alliance with him, promising to help him with men and money whenever he should be in need. He also made over to the enemy the entire expenses of the war, and another lump sum to build a fort in commemoration of his friendship, and with these he permitted the enemy to go back to his city and live happily.

When night fell, Vikrmaditya put on a disguise and went to the house of Kam Kandhla, professing to be a physician. He was at once taken to the sick-chamber of the lady, who was still very ill and had been given up for lost by her own physicians. The Raja found her to be perfectly unrivalled in beauty, and indeed more charming than she was reputed to be. "I can diagnose the sick only from sight," said the disguised Raja, "and from a sight of this lady I declare it as my opinion that she is suffering from the malady of love." At the sound of the word 'love' she opened her eyes and languidly turned her head on the pillow, but noticing a physician beside her bed, she broke out into a violent paroxysm and said to her mother, "Have I not told you not to tamper with physic any more? Doses and drugs can do me no good. My malady is incurable. Let me linger in my sufferings without being put to torture by these stupid mountebanks." Hearing this rebuke her mother left the

room, and the Raja seized this opportunity of speaking to her in private, "O beauty ! It is a pity that you should suffer yourself to be consumed by the fire of separation at an age when you ought to be enjoying every kind of pleasure. Do not languish in this self-inflicted misery."

At these words she heaved a deep sigh, and with her eyes streaming with tears, said, " You are not a mere physician but a magician too, else you would not have been able to point your finger at my malady so correctly." The Raja replied, " When I was in Ujjain I saw a young man named Madho who was crying most piteously with your name constantly on his lips." He had hardly finished his sentence when she hastily interrupted him and said, " Alas ! I am the unhappy cause of his innocent sufferings. Oh, how is he, and where is he, and what is he doing ? Tell me all in one word. No one is likely to be here to intrude upon our privacy, and you may freely communicate to me whatever you know about him."

" We were great friends," said the Raja, " but about a fortnight ago, alas ! he breathed his last, after a painful illness which defied my best drugs." Kam Kandhla had breath to utter only a few words : " Dearest Madho ! Hast thou indeed deserted me for ever, leaving me in this fathomless ocean of grief ?" and then she fainted away with a loud shriek that resounded from room to room through her house. Her mother ran to her chamber, and finding Kam Kandhla lying stiff and still, thought she was dead. In a fit of agony she dashed her head against the ground and

wailed in wild despair, and fell upon her daughter's neck. The Raja tore her away, but as soon as she was separated, she too fell into a fainting fit, from which she was recovered with the greatest difficulty. On regaining consciousness she wept and wailed again, saying that her priceless treasure was lost, that her only source of livelihood was taken away from her. The Raja comforted her by telling her that her daughter was not dead, but had only lost her senses, and that he would go to his house and quickly fetch a medicine to bring her back to consciousness. She at first disbelieved the words of the physician, saying that doctors were habitual liars, but in any case there was no course open to her but to hold her patience.

The Raja came back to his camp and sent for Madho, who came running like a madman, being wild with anxiety to hear some news of his Kam Kandhla. But when the Raja told him that she was dead, Madho was as it were struck down by a thunderbolt, and rolled down from his seat, apparently a lifeless corpse. The Raja feared he had killed him, and bitterly repented of his folly in resorting to this sort of extreme to test the love of the two lovers. He was not sure if he had actually caused their death, but he grievously suspected that both cases might terminate fatally. He believed he had committed a great sin for which there could be no atonement. The blood of two innocent lovers rested upon his head, and he did not know what answer he could make to God for this act of heedless cruelty. He felt that his own death could alone expiate for the sin, and with

this thought he ordered his servants to erect a funeral pile of sandal wood, on which he determined to immolate himself. When the pile was ready, he mounted it and ordered it to be set on fire. His followers were astonished to see the Raja in such a fit of lunacy, and they pressed him persistently to unfold the cause of his madness to them. The Raja threw one of his fierce looks upon them, and they had no courage to speak a single word more. When the pile was burning on every side, the Raja's demons appeared and asked him what he was going to do. The Raja told them the story of the dying lovers, how he had himself probably hastened their death in trying to play a practical joke with a view to testing the sincerity of their love, and concluded by saying that if Kam Kandhla and Madho were not brought back to life, he would burn himself to ashes. The demons solemnly promised to obey the Raja's wishes immediately, and Vikrmaditya dismounted from the flaming pile which was then quickly extinguished. The same evening the demons brought the water of immortality and gave it to the Raja who put two or three drops of it into the mouth of Madho and the latter at once opened his eyes. The same process was applied in the case of Kam Kandhla, and she too came back to life, and then the Raja said to her, "Pardon me, Kam Kandhla, I am not a physician, as my disguise may have led you to infer,—I am Raja Vikrmaditya, come here from Ujjain to relieve your sufferings."

She was ready to start from her bed to show proper

reverence to the Emperor, but she was too weak even to sit up in bed, and she could feebly utter a few broken ejaculations conveying her welcome and her homage, followed by the oft-repeated exclamation, "Alas! my dearest Madho is no more!" The Raja, unwilling to put her to further torture, quickly whispered in her ear that Madho was safe in his camp. "What!" she said with a deep sigh, "has my delirium come back to me, or have I heard it rightly? If my ears have not deceived me, I am a living woman again. Tell me, gracious lord, how it has all come about, for I am burning with curiosity."

The Raja told her the whole story of the expedition he had undertaken against Kamnagar, and then asked her to get ready to start for his camp where Madho was impatiently awaiting her. A palanquin was sent for, and Kam Kandhla was seated in it and brought to the Raja's camp, and the meeting of the two lovers that followed was a sight that gave the Raja more joy than the proudest conquest he had ever achieved.

Next morning the Raja summoned the lovers to his tent, and after congratulating them upon their reunion, said, "Now your hopes are fulfilled and my task is done, and it is time for me to return to my kingdom. Let me know if there is anything further that I can do for you." Madho replied that his sole wish now was to spend the remainder of his life in the service of his benefactor; and Kam Kandhla followed this up with the remark that her only desire was to live and die in the sight of her lord. The king

replied, "How is it possible for a high-caste Brahman to be wedded to a dancing-girl, what though she might be an angel in beauty?"

At these words Madho's face was shaded by a cloud, and his eyes began to rain down tears; but Kam Kandhla came forward boldly and declared: "Two persons of different castes may lawfully be tied together in marriage when they are already united by the bond of love. Your Majesty has been the happy instrument of restoring us to each other; you have been the saviour of our lives; gratitude has made us your slaves already without the need of any formal servitude on our part; all that remains is a royal recognition of our position and status."

"You are an eloquent advocate, I see," remarked the Raja laughing, "and your charms, wit and grace have pleased me well. And for their sake I am glad to grant your request." So taking the loving couple with him, Vikramaditya started next morning for his kingdom. The news of the Raja's victorious return to his capital was the occasion of a brilliant demonstration on the part of his subjects. The roads were lined with troops; the people thronged the streets and the windows of houses, and raised shouts of joy as the Raja's procession marched through the city to the palace. A week later, the marriage ceremony of Madho and Kam Kandhla was celebrated with great pomp and rejoicing. The Raja made Madho one of his favourite attendants, and led Kam Kandhla into the harem to bear the company of the queens, and they both rose rapidly in royal favour."

Thus ended the long story of Madho and Kam Kandhla, and then the Image turned to Raja Bhoj and said, "I have come to the end of my story, and I daresay this time you find yourself convinced that you are quite unworthy of this throne." The Raja glared in wrath upon the image and withdrew sullenly from her presence.

Anuprekha

the twenty-second Image, met Raja Bhoj with a storm of reproaches as soon as he came next morning into the throne-room, and then lapsed into a tone of faint entreaty, saying, "I am much pained to see you tortured by a desire which it is beyond human possibility to fulfil,—a desire that will eventually work your own destruction. What worse evil it might beget I am just now unable to foresee. It is rather wearisome to repeat the same thing over and over again, but I find no other way to make you understand the superiority of Raja Vikrmaditya. I tell you once more that you are quite insignificant as compared with Vikrmaditya, for the latter was simply unapproachable in his virtues."

Raja Bhoj was as usual highly incensed at these words, and his reply bespoke the fiercest rage as he said, "Sometimes words hurt more than swords,—learn therefore to hold thy tongue." The image coolly replied, "I am surprised to see that yesterday's warning has made you no wiser." Receiving no reply

to this, the Image went on to say, " Well, then, hear another story from me : —

Once Raja Vikramaditya talking on different topics asked his ministers whether wisdom was implanted by nature at birth, or transmitted by heredity. " Wisdom is a priceless jewel," remarked one of his ministers, " and it is rarely found in one man out of a thousand, although everybody professes to possess it. Therefore, I think, it can only be bestowed by the Almighty." " You are wrong," said the Raja; " you apparently forget that whatever a child hears from his parents he speaks, and whatever he sees he does. If you keep him aloof from human society he will not be able to speak a single word. The only point of difference between you and me is that I think wisdom is imparted by parents also."

The minister replied, " Such a child as you suppose, will surely be able to speak, and be gifted with wisdom, if God has given him that quality at birth ; it is only a little training in manners that parents impart. I can adduce many reasons in support of my statement, but I cannot presume to hold a discussion with your majesty."

The Raja ordered a fine palace to be erected in the middle of a forest, and when that was ready, he sent one of his infant princes, aged five months, to live there, and appointed a deaf and dumb wet-nurse to take care of him. Guards were appointed to keep watch over the child, and they were strictly forbidden to utter a single word before the prince.

Three other children of the same age, namely, the son of a minister, the son of the Chief of the Police, and a little Brahman child were sent to play with the prince when he grew older.

At the end of seven years the Brahman's wife, the mother of the Prince's third playmate, became impatient to see her boy, whom she had not seen for a long time, and sent her husband to the King's court to obtain permission for her to see her son. The Raja told him to have patience, and ordered him to come again next day. Meanwhile he summoned the Prince's guards and asked them whether the Prince had, in their opinion, grown fit to be educated. The guards replied that he was fit to receive any kind of education. So the Raja ordered the minister to go to the castle with a robe of state and a carriage to bring the prince to the palace. The minister went, and found the Prince playing merrily with his companions. Seeing a well-dressed gentleman entering the castle gate, the children all ran towards him, considering him as an object of curiosity. The minister lifted the Prince joyfully in his arms, and made him and his companions sit in the state coach, and brought them to the palace. The Raja clasped his son to his bosom, and kissed him with paternal warmth. He then fondled his three companions, but all the children could speak very little, and the little that they could murmur was hardly intelligible. "There is no sign of wisdom in any of them," said the Raja to his minister, "although they can just speak a few words, according to your presupposition."

"It is strange," replied the minister, "that your majesty expected to see the light of wisdom without the torch of knowledge. However, you will have a fair chance of judging their ability and wisdom later in life. When they grow to manhood they will get this valuable gift of nature according to their pre-ordained share. Their skill, of course, will not be alike or equal, but each will have his due share according to his education."

The Raja then ordered all the four children to be sent to school and himself supervised their education. When they grew up to be young men they were married, all except the Prince, but they remained intimate friends up to the last, and did not want to be separated from one another for a moment. Barring the Prince, the Raja took all of them into his service and allotted them posts suitable to their wisdom and ability and they all gained distinction and were the Raja's special favourites."

At this point the Image turned to Raja Bhoj and said, "My story ends here, and I hope you now see that Vikramaditya was a patron of learning and an appreciator of merit. We have proved this once, twice, thrice, many times, and although you were at first disinclined to accept our views, I hope your better sense has now returned and that you now agree with us in believing what the whole world holds to be true, that Vikramaditya was indeed a king of matchless worth and virtue."

Raja Bhoj gave no reply and made as if the Image was not addressing him but somebody else.

Karunamati

the twenty-third Image, thereupon turned to Bhoj and said, "If you do not wish to listen to her, listen to me. I take no delight in railing, rather, I make it a business to offer wholesome counsel in seasons of difficulty, and thereby to ward off evil from a doomed head. My earnest advice to you is that you should contract your overweening desire to occupy this throne, for it can only result in evil for you. He who plays with edged tools must expect to cut himself."

"Nonsense!" exclaimed the Raja, "I put no faith in your peurile maxims which you should hold in reserve to bamboozle fools." The eyes of the Image filled with tears at these discourteous words, and she said in a low voice, "I hate prophecies, but yet I am constrained to say that the clouds of misery are gathering thick and fast around you, and that they will soon overshadow the sun of your good fortune." "I take no notice of your words," replied the Raja, "and as for your tears they are too feeble a stream to wash down my desire. Moreover, I know that women laugh whenever they can, and weep whenever they will."

These were words of a stinging nature, but the Image quietly tolerated them and only said in reply, "Even flint and steel are softer material than your

heart. But will you please listen to a story relating to Raja Vikrmaditya which just strikes my mind :—

When Raja Vikrmaditya succeeded his brother Shankh on the throne, he wished to make a wholesale change in the *personnel* of the administration. He ordered one of his aged ministers to procure for him twenty men of the highest learning and ability whom he could appoint to the various offices under the crown. In a month's time the minister was able to collect only ten officers whom he presented to the king for approval. The king approved them and allotted to them honorable situations in the court, but the old minister remained in his old post, without receiving any promotion or preferment. As each old servant was turned out of his office, he went to the house of the minister and begged to be reinstated. The minister could only reply, "I do not know why the Raja has not yet got rid of me. I myself expected to be turned out like yourself. Vikrmaditya is unquestionably an able ruler, and it is impossible to guess his proceedings beforehand. Nobody can say why he did this or that. There is some baffling mystery, I think, at the bottom of these perplexing changes."

But the importunities of dismissed officials grew no whit less insistent, and they continued to flock to the minister's house, daily dinging into his ears pathetic prayers for their reinstatement. The minister was obliged to tell them one day that their daily visits would be construed as a conspiracy, and they would all be hanged if they continued to come

to him in that manner, "Because," he said, "the character of the government has changed since the day Ujjain passed under the sceptre of our new sovereign Vikrmaditya."

One day the minister went to a river for a bath, and seeing a lovely flower floating on the water, he took it out with a view to presenting it to the Raja. The flower was a marvel of beauty and fragrance, and the Raja was exceedingly pleased to get it, and ordered the minister to bring its plant wherever it might be found, failing which he should regard himself as under sentence of lifelong banishment. The poor minister was quite confused to hear this arbitrary mandate, and in faltering accents represented, "Sire, I do not know where this flower grows: I merely picked it out of a river." "I don't care for that," replied the Raja, "Do what I have bidden or suffer what I have threatened." This was the first time that Vikrmaditya appeared or acted like a despotic king, but there was no knowing what the new sovereign might turn out to be.

The minister came home much cast-down, and imparted his grief to his wife, and said that his long faithful service had in the end been rewarded with banishment. His wife advised him to represent his case to the Raja a second time, and so a second time he went to the court and with folded hands entreated the king to excuse him, because it was impossible for any man to discover the home of a flower that he had accidentally caught in a running stream. But his further remonstrances only exasperated the

Raja's rage, and he thundered out, "You had better keep quiet than offer lame excuses. I have already told you what will happen in case you fail to carry out my behest, and I have nothing to add to that."

The minister humbly made his obeisance and left the royal presence. He had no choice but to do as ordered, and he therefore determined to take a voyage up the river in quest of the required plant. Fitting out one of the royal ships, he sailed up the river in the direction whence the flower had come floating. He kept sailing for about a month, but no trace of the plant was visible, nor did he come across any other flower of that kind. One day the ship's steward suddenly informed him that the provisions on board the vessel had run short, and that he must be prepared either to starve or turn back. The prospect of starvation was far from pleasing to a pampered courtier, and the horror that filled his mind on this occasion was worse than the horror with which he had heard the king's order of banishment. He was face to face with a dreadful dilemma : if he turned back he would be banished by the king ; if he went on, he was sure to die of starvation. He determined to continue the voyage for one day longer. Next morning, as he was on the point of giving orders to sail homeward, two huge mountains running in parallel ranges suddenly burst forth upon the view, just as they turned a sharp bend in the course of the river. Approaching nearer, the minister discerned that the slopes of those mountains were grown over with plants bearing the selfsame species of flower

that he was in search of. The old minister clapped his hands like a child in glee, exclaiming, "Now our troubles are at an end!"

The ship was anchored in a creek near the foot of the mountains, and the minister landed on the shore. He noticed that the river had its source somewhere in these very mountains. Next morning just at day-break the minister climbed up the slopes of the mountain and penetrated the thick forest in search of the plant, and told his companions to keep on board, and maintain a sharp watch against pirates. On ascending the slopes the minister was disappointed to find that the plants he had first seen were not the same he was in search of, but indications that the flower had its home in these mountains were not wanting, and hence the minister toiled on in his upward ascent, piercing the dense forest deeper and deeper. The interior of the woods was so dark that even midday looked like night; the ground was strewn with thorns; the steep precipitous ascents were most trying to his aged limbs; but still the minister persevered through these difficulties because the threat of death and banishment had made him a desperate man. At last exhausted and fatigued he sought a spot where he could take a little rest, but no such spot was anywhere in sight. Toiling on some steps further, he espied a ruined and desolate temple on the top of one of the peaks. The sight of this ruin roused him with fresh hope and he thought he might meet some human beings there. So he ascended the top of the peak as fast as his weary legs

could carry him, and after many stoppages on the way he at last reached the summit and found the eastern entrance of the temple standing wide open, but no living creature was found within. The temple, though deserted, was of beautiful design and architecture, bespeaking the skill of ancient artists. For some time the minister stood admiring the beauty and finish of the delicate structure before him, and then lay down on the floor of the temple and fell asleep. On waking up he felt thirsty and having quenched his thirst from a clear spring flowing close by, he started again on his quest.

In the course of his wandering hither and thither up the hills, the minister happened to look down into a valley, where he saw the body of an aged devotee hanging down from a tree, with his legs bound with an iron chain and his mouth dripping with blood. Every drop of blood which trickled from his gaping mouth fell into the water of the river below, and was immediately turned into a lovely flower. He was struck dumb at the sight of this ghastly scene. Proceeding onwards he saw twenty other devotees similarly suspended in another valley. He gathered as many of these flowers as he could, and turned back in order to return to his ship where he had left his companions. After experiencing all the troubles of the way a second time, he at last reached his ship, just as the evening twilight was turning into the darkness of night. As soon as they saw him, his companions gathered round him and put many questions to him regarding the plant he had

gone in search of. The minister, before replying, called for a glass of wine to refresh himself, and then gave the following account of his adventures to his comrades :—

" I made a search for the plant throughout the forest, but the tree is so big that nobody can walk round the trunk between dawn and dusk. But alas ! my labour has been fruitless in another way, for there are so many varieties of that plant that even an expert botanist cannot make a selection. The buds generally blossom in spring, and in that season the flower can be gathered in profusion. The Raja will not believe me when I tell him all this, and the result will be that I shall have to leave his kingdom, as he has already ordered. However I shall try my best to win his credence."

This was, of course, all a lie, or rather a piece of ministerial diplomacy, for he did not wish to communicate the secret to his companions, but kept it reserved for the Raja's ears alone. Next day, the anchor was drawn up, and the ship made a rapid passage down the river towards Ujjain. The wind was favourable, and with accelerated speed the vessel coursed through the water and performed her return voyage in half the time. The sudden and unexpected arrival of the minister caused great rejoicings in his family circle, for his people had given him up for dead the moment he started on his perilous quest.

" Have you succeeded in your mission ? " asked the minister's son, not doubting his father's success but merely inquisitive to know how that success had

been won. The minister replied enigmatically, "I have partly succeeded and partly failed ; the balance of fate hangs evenly ; let us see to which side it leans."

The minister lost no time in presenting himself before the Raja who stepped down from his throne to receive him,—he had never been received so cordially before. Kneeling down at the foot of the throne, the minister first gave an account of his voyage, and then stated that he had tried his best to bring the required plant, but failed, though he had brought many other flowers of the same species. He concluded by saying, "Now I throw myself entirely on your mercy. Keep me or turn me out, as you will,—I have done my duty."

"Well," asked the Raja, "did you see those old and dead devotees with your own eyes, or did you simply hear of them ?"

"Sire," he replied, "I saw them with my own eyes, but when I entered the forest I was unfortunately all alone."

The Raja then led him to his private chamber and there said to him, "You were Prime Minister to my late brother Shankh, and you have also served me faithfully. The devotee whom you saw suspended from the tree is my own self, as I was in my previous birth. I performed that austere penance to win the reward of being born a mighty king in the next incarnation. The twenty other devotees you saw in the valley were all my pupils. They also practised this mortification of the flesh, and they are now reborn as my tried and trusty counsellors. I knew

well that the plant I asked for did not exist, but I sent you in quest of it, in order that you might witness this scene yourself, because I had retained you in your old appointment and had dismissed the other old servants. Now that you know the secret, take care not to disclose it to anybody. Excuse my former roughness, for you now perceive that my motives were fair and honourable."

The minister replied with a profound bow, "Rebukes and threats from the master turn out to be blessings for the servant." "Hear me further," interrupted the Raja, "you see that the world is casting a stigma on me, saying that Vikrmaditya slew his brother Shankh out of avarice for his wealth, but the truth is they do not know that I am innocent. Whatever has been done has been done by God, and I have been merely a helpless tool in His hand. I shall however not omit to thank you for all that you have done to me. For when I ascended the throne, I was but a novice, quite unfit to bear the burden of government, but through the counsel and assistance rendered by you and other servants of the state, I hope I have safely steered my course, at least so far."

"Sire," replied the minister respectfully, "whatever you did was in obedience to God's command. It was He who destined your head to wear the crown of Hindustan. Your country has grown prosperous, and your subjects happy under your rule, and above all, you have been a lover of peace, one of the brightest attributes of a sovereign."

Vikrmaditya acknowledged the minister's compliments in suitable words, and rewarded his services with the bestowal of costly presents and honorable titles."

Here the Image concluded her narration, and directed a personal appeal to Raja Bhoj in the following words:—"Once more I beseech you to reflect on your own shortcomings and perceive the mighty difference between yourself and Vikrmaditya. It would be but tedious repetition were I to recount the virtues of that saintly monarch whose throne you covet so eagerly." Raja Bhoj left the room without giving any answer.

Chitrakala

the twenty-fourth Image, maintained a shy silence on seeing Raja Bhoj next morning, as if she had not noticed him at all, and Raja Bhoj too, without speaking a word, quietly advanced his foot to mount the throne, as if there was no one to stop him. Then suddenly she burst out into a loud laugh, and said, "It is beyond question that you have been blinded by the beauty of this throne—blinded not only in your judgment, but also in your eyes. It is equally true that your claim to be equal to Vikrmaditya is also an empty dream. For Vikrmaditya was a king of superhuman excellence. Nature had poured into his lap a store of wisdom, a learning such as has never been vouchsafed to mortal man. He enjoyed

at the hands of natives and foreigners alike, an adoration amounting to zealous idolatry. He was even called by the name of a god. As a ruler he was just and sagacious to perfection ; he kept law and order with a firm hand throughout his empire ; he treated his own sons and his servants alike. You seem to attach no weight to my opinion on this subject, or it is perhaps my free speech that has roused your anger."

Raja Bhoj was thinking what reply to give, when the Image again spoke, "Self-control is an essential attribute of sovereignty : a king that cannot rule his own passions cannot rule a kingdom, and I wonder how you maintain order and discipline among your subjects when like a silly girl you are becoming mad after this throne. You will not confess this just now in the heat of passion, but in your cooler moments you are bound to admit the truth of my assertion. As regards your desire to sit on this throne, you are welcome to it at all times, only you must be prepared for the fearful consequences. Let me tell you a story of Raja Vikrmaditya that will enable you, I hope, to form a correct estimate of his character :—

One morning Raja Vikrmaditya went to a river to take his bath. On the bank he saw a beautiful damsel drying her hair in the sun. In front of her, but some forty feet away, sat her lover, a noble youth gazing on her charms with steadfast looks. There were some speechless messages passing between the two, some exchange of tender glances, deep-drawn sighs, and such other dainty devices as lovers are

wont to adopt to signify their emotion. When the sun grew warm, she started in the direction of her home, her lover closely following her footsteps. The Raja sent a soldier after them to find out who they were and where they lived. He then took his bath, said his prayers on the river bank, and went back to his palace. Shortly after, the soldier returned and reported to the Raja that the man and woman were neighbours and were in love with each other. He was dismissed with the warning that he must keep this fact strictly secret, on pain of death.

In the evening the Raja sat in his hall, amusing himself with talk with his courtiers and favourites. Suddenly he asked a Pundit if anyone could correctly guess a woman's resolve. The Pundit replied, "That is a task the difficulty of which borders on impossibility. A female's desire and a man's fortune cannot be known by the gods themselves, because while men have their will, women have their way." "Yes," said the Raja, with a nod of the head, and then passed on to other topics of conversation.

At night the Raja intimated to his queens that he had to attend an important state function outside the city and was therefore obliged to excuse himself from their company. The queens considering the urgent nature of the business did not dare to press him. Vikramaditya sallied out of the castle and meeting the soldier who had been sent to discover the house of the lovers, ordered him to conduct him to the place, and having reached it he dismissed the soldier and proceeded to carry out his plans. The

night was unusually dark, and it was then raining in torrents, and the Raja feared lest in his disguise he should be caught as a burglar and roughly handled. Suddenly he noticed a stream of faint light issuing from the window of the maiden's house, and the Raja stood at the door to see what happened. At midnight she secretly came out of her house, and seeing the Raja standing at the door, and unable to recognise him in the darkness, mistook him for her lover, and in the excitement of the stolen meeting, she threw her arms round the Raja's neck and kissed him over and over again. The Raja behaved as if he were indeed her lover, so that the illusion was well kept up. She then handed him a small steel chest which she said contained her jewels and would, she hoped, suffice for the expenses of the journey.

The Raja guessed that an elopement had been prepared for. He quietly took the box from her hand and then said, "There is one thing more to be done : you must kill your husband, and then can we travel safely, for if he lives, he will raise a hue and cry the very next morning when he finds you missing from the house." The woman replied, "Yes, I will do that ; when I have put my faith in you, I must loyally carry out your biddings." She accordingly went back into her house, and stabbed her husband in sleep and came back and joined the Raja at the door, chuckling over the success of her achievement.

The next question was for the Raja to determine whither she had arranged for a flight. He had so far avoided speech as much as possible, but he had to

speak a word or two before, and the woman had noticed nothing strange in his voice to arouse her suspicion. The Raja was therefore no more afraid of speaking, for the woman's inability to detect his disguise at the very first words he had spoken, led him to infer that his voice was similar to that of her lover. So he said, "Where shall we go at such a late hour of the night, although the darkness should seem to be favourable ? We have to cross a river, you know, two miles from here : who will ferry us across, even supposing we are lucky enough to find a boat moored on the bank ? Then supposing we can row across somehow, our path on the other side lies through a forest full of wild beasts." "Don't trouble yourself about these", said the woman, "the river is not so deep as you think ; you remember I took my bath there, this morning." "Yes", said the Raja hastily, and caught her hand, and they both started towards the river, and having reached the bank, she sat down to take a little rest before wading through the waters. "We should not waste time", said the Raja, "before dawn we ought to be beyond fear of arrest."

So the Raja got up, but asked the woman to wait there till he returned after examining the river's depth at the ford, adding that if he found it shallow enough, he would ask her to follow. This plan was agreed upon, but when he reached the middle of the stream, the Raja thought to himself that that was an excellent opportunity for him to take his exit and bring the masquerade to a close. So crossing over to the other side the Raja ran back to his palace, and

crept into his bed, nobody suspecting anything about his midnight frolic.

Meanwhile the woman kept waiting and waiting for her lover's voice, until, tired of waiting, and unable to hear the splashing caused by the Raja's wading, she called out to him in a loud voice, forgetting that she was attempting a secret escape. Not a single sound was heard in answer to her cries, except the redoubling echoes of her own voice. The night was still exceedingly dark, and she was all alone, sitting on the bank of a river, with not a human being within call. She was so frightened that she was unable to realise fully the horrors of her situation. Then came a strong feeling of repentance for the great crime she had been led to commit at the instigation of a faithless lover, and a corresponding feeling of returning love for her deceased husband. She shuddered to think of the endless torments which her soul would have to suffer in hell after death. As for the loss of her jewels, which she had indiscreetly trusted into the hands of her deceitful paramour, the regret for that was nothing in comparison with the feeling of remorse which gnawed at her heart. In the midst of these melancholy musings it seemed to her as if some voice were whispering into her ear that her lamentations were unavailing, as they were too late to set matters right. "Be my future fate whatever it may," said she to herself, "my immediate concern is to prevent this secret from leaking out, and for this I am obliged to play a most cunning part."

So she went back to her house as fast as she could, and quietly got into her bed, and then raised an alarm, "Help, ho! here's murder! Robbers have stabbed my dear husband to death, and have carried off my jewel box!" The inmates of the house ran into her room and found her husband lying murdered indeed. They asked her repeatedly in what direction the robbers had fled, and other details of the daring outrage, but she only sobbed and wept in a hysterical manner and gave no replies. Her lover, whose house was just opposite to hers, started up from sleep to hear the loud wail proceeding from the house of his mistress, and thought that her intrigues had probably been detected by her husband. She must have come out of the house to meet her lover, as arranged, but he had failed to keep his engagement owing to his having fallen asleep at the appointed hour. He thought that the woman must have been caught and beaten mercilessly by her husband for misconduct. Under these circumstances he considered it inadvisable for him to go to her house, as that would only make matters worse for her.

Next morning, as the dead body of her husband was prepared for the funeral, the woman declared that she had made up her mind to become a *Suttee* and burn herself on the same pyre with her husband. Her relatives gladly gave their consent, as the cruel custom was very much in vogue in ancient times and was rather regarded as honorable and commendable. When all was ready, she ascended the pile which

was then set on fire. But when her clothes and her hair caught the fire, and the flames shrouded her completely, she proved incapable of bearing the agony, and jumped down from the pile into the river below. A great crowd had assembled on the river bank to witness the scene of immolation, and the Raja was himself one of the spectators. Seeing the woman's disgraceful flight, the Raja burst out into a loud laugh and said, "I thought this would be the end, for it was inconceivable how a woman could turn *Suttee* after murdering her own husband."

The woman was startled to hear this, and the truth came home to her mind in a flash. She now felt that it was not her lover who had proved false to her, but Raja Vikrmaditya who had thrown her into that awkward predicament. She was too ashamed to make any answer, and the Raja flung a storm of invective at her, calling her "shameless creature" and so on. Stung into a rage, the woman at last replied, "There are altogether seven women in this city, who despise their husbands and are in illicit love with paramours. Six of them are in the royal harem, and the seventh is myself. Don't call me shameless until you have seen those others." And uttering these words she drowned herself in the river and was seen no more.

The Raja returned home, and having taken his meal, went to bed. But he had no sleep. The last words of the dying woman kept ringing in his ears. He wondered who these six queens were whom the woman had alluded to: he had never suspected any

one of them before, but now he suspected them all equally. He did not know what to do, and at one time thought of beheading all his queens and living a confirmed widower during the rest of his life. "For", he said to himself, "if I do not punish the guilty, they will only grow hardened in villainy, and a foul stain will attach to my honour, which is dearer to me than gay gold. But if I cause a general massacre it will give rise to a public sensation more scandalous than the secret whispers of infamy." He thought first of speaking to the queens. Coming out of his room he called them together and said, "I am going to ride out at the head of my forces to a place where war is threatened immediately. I am very fond of your sweet company, but the cruel necessities of public duty compel me to leave you for some time." The queens of course replied, "Our happiness consists in being always in your company, but we cannot dare to interfere with your state duties." The Raja took leave of his queens, and came out of the palace and then went into his garden, pretending that he had to worship the goddess of victory before setting out on the campaign, and when night fell, he stole out, and hid himself behind the walls of the palace, close to the postern door. It was the moonless fortnight of the rainy season, and the night was therefore one of exceptional darkness which was made worse by a thick canopy of clouds hanging in the sky. Just after the hour of midnight, the postern door opened lightly, and six of his queens came out bearing gold plates full of delicious food of all kinds. They

proceeded in the direction of a forest, and the Raja secretly followed them, always keeping at a safe distance.

The Raja wondered where they could be going at that hour of the night. He himself felt tired, but the queens betrayed no signs of fatigue, and this surprised him all the more, for he used to think that they could not walk more than a few steps, being of a delicate constitution made softer by luxurious living. At one time he wished to end the matter by putting them to death in the middle of the dark forest, for he had armed himself with a sword as a precaution against danger. But the next moment he checked himself, and recalling his motto "Peace and Justice at any cost," did not think it worthy to go to this extreme until he obtained plain proofs of their guilt. He was revolving these thoughts in his mind when all of a sudden a faint light was visible in a hut, and the queens, seeing the light, laughed in joy and said to one another that their happy destination was at hand. Seeing the spot, the Raja recollect ed that he had once passed that way and remembered the cottage to have been the abode of a devotee.

By and by the queens arrived at the hut and placed their plates of food before a man who appeared to be a pious hermit in contemplation, at whose feet the queens bowed one after another with the utmost love and reverence. The hermit at first took no notice of their presence, and remained with his eyes closed ostensibly in prayer. After a few moments

he opened his eyes and gazed upon the ladies with a passion of lust which belied his exterior mask of sanctity. He greedily ate up all the food that the queens had brought for him, and the Raja was surprised to see a gaunt-looking devotee devouring a quantity of food sufficient to stuff an elephant. After talking with the queens for a while in lascivious accents, the devotee multiplied himself into six men and enjoyed the company of the six queens in this multiple form. The Raja's blood began to boil within him to see this satanic wickedness played under a cloak of holiness. But he held his peace, determined to watch the proceedings to the end. He concluded that the devotee must be a powerful magician, upon whom violence would have no effect, but he waited until the close of the secret interview.

As soon as the first faint light of dawn streaked the eastern horizon, the queens took leave of the devotee and wended their way back to the palace which they reached before the inmates were stirring. But the Raja did not follow them this time. When it was broad daylight, he entered the devotee's hut, and made his obeisance, which the holy man acknowledged with the customary blessings, and then added, "How fortunate is the chance which has brought you here this morning to grace my humble hut with a visit : let me know what service I can do to your majesty." "May it please your reverence," said the Raja, "my only object in coming here is to ask you if you know any charm or spell by which a man can multiply himself into six different men. I am not

sure if such a thing is at all possible : I have been told so by a man whom I cannot call very trustworthy."

The face of the devotee grew pale, and his forehead became clouded, and a cold shudder passed over his body as he heard the Raja's words. He suspected that the king had come to know of his secret intrigue with six of his queens. But he put the best face on the matter and said, " Yes, there is such a charm, and I know it myself, and can teach it to you in a moment." And without waiting for the Raja's request he taught him the charm, and the Raja verified it immediately by multiplying his own self into six figures, two or three times, to assure himself that it would not fail him at the hour of need. Finding the charm now indubitably in his power he started up, and drawing his sword struck the devotee's head off his shoulders at one blow. He then washed his sword in the river, and returned hastily to his palace, and arriving there, immediately went into the queens' apartments. Seeing the Raja coming so unexpectedly, the six faithless queens ran forward to welcome him with such a show of love that it appeared to be plainly hypocritical. " Hallo ! how is it that you could get back to our embraces so quickly ? " " Well," replied the Raja, suppressing his anger as much as he could, " I could settle the dispute peacefully, without the necessity of fighting and bloodshed. And then the recollection of your sweet faces, and the perpetual thrill of love I felt for you made me retrace my steps all the quicker." The queens replied, " How happy we feel that you have come back so unexpectedly,

for while you were away the canker of separation was eating into our hearts."

The Raja paused a while in suspense as to in what way he should broach the subject of their unfaithfulness, and then said, "I have heard, to my greatest surprise and regret, that you do not love me half as well as you profess, but why, I have not yet been able to trace. The queens quickly replied, "O, what do you say? Your words horrify us. How has this madness crept into your brain? Alas! do you mistrust us? What! do you class us with those false women who....." "Do not take a joke too seriously," interrupted the Raja, "I was only trifling." On this occasion the Raja said nothing further, but dropped the subject. In the evening, after dinner, when he was again chatting with the queens, he remarked that one day as he was out hunting in the forest he saw a man who could multiply himself into six different figures and could enjoy the society of six women simultaneously. At these words a deadly shiver passed through the bodies of the six faithless queens, and a livid palour spread over their face; but in order to disguise their true feelings they replied in a voice broken with agitation, "You are mocking us. How can that be?" "Have patience till the evening and I shall show you how that can be," said the Raja laconically.

When night fell the Raja took the six queens with him and started for the jungle. The queens had now no doubt left in their mind that their secret had reached the ears of the Raja. They pretended to be tired, but the Raja did not listen to their excuse,

saying that the dear sight of the strange man was well worth the trouble. When no other alternative was left, they submissively followed the Raja till the party reached the hut formerly occupied by the devotee whom he had put to death. After a brief pause, the Raja's heart was filled with grief ; his eyes moistened with tears, and he gave vent to his feelings in the following bitter words :—

“ Since the day you married me I have provided all your wants and kept you in a beautiful and comfortable palace that any queen of the world could well envy, but faithless to my love and devotion, you set your heart on a painted devotee and cast a foul stain upon my honour. However, your protestations of love are so happily worded that no suspicion can rest upon you. You have an extraordinary command of honied words, your beauty is almost angelic, but I feel constrained to carry out the law of the land, of which Providence has appointed me sole trustee. Therefore, know ye that you are the subject of my displeasure, and for this, and in accordance with the provisions of the law, death by strangling should be the proper punishment for your offence. But I have chosen another way of meeting the requirements of the law. I would fain have spared you if my circumstances had permitted it. What a painful duty I have to perform with my own hands in a very few minutes !”

The queens flung themselves at the Raja's feet and begged him to obtain proofs of their guilt before passing sentence upon them. But the Raja drew his sword and cut off the head of one of the

queens first. The others, with horror-struck eyes, entreated the Raja to pardon their guilt, and tried all their arts of persuasion and prayer to excite his pity. But he turned a deaf ear to all their supplications, and said, "Your tears and entreaties disarm me, but yet your guilt is unpardonable. I have myself been an eye-witness of your misconduct, and what further proof do I need?" So saying he beheaded all the other queens one after another, and stripped their bodies of all ornaments and came back to Ujjain. Next morning he gave these jewels away to poor Brahman girls as provision for their marriage."

Having gone so far in her narration, the Image paused and turning to Raja Bhoj said, "Let me know now what your wishes are in respect of this throne." Raja Bhoj answered, "Fie upon this throne! I'll have none of it. Vikramaditya's queens were guilty of the most shameful misconduct, such as would defile the memory of the meanest individual,—I am ashamed to hear such stories. If I had known this before I should have given way long ago."

"Judge fairly," returned the Image; "Raja Vikramaditya set up a high standard of morality and virtue not only in his court but throughout his empire, and by beheading six of his own queens he not only blotted out all trace of misconduct from his own palace but put an effective check on female villainy generally. But I daresay there are many men in the modern world who by their connivance give tacit encouragement to their faithless wives." Raja Bhoj thought

that the reference was to himself, so he left the throne room in high dudgeon.

Jai Lakshmi

the twenty-fifth Image, seeing Raja Bhoj come again into the throne-room next morning, met him with a mocking face and a scornful laugh, and then she said, "I am glad to observe that you occupy your spare hours daily in conversation with us." "Not so," answered King Bhoj ; " I have come not to hold conversation with you, but to hold you in servitude, same as he did to whom this throne belonged." " And *will ever belong*," added the Image, laying a strong stress on every word ; " for have we not told you over and over again that the throne of Vikrmaditya can be occupied but by one who is equal to Vikrmaditya in every respect ? I am pained to see that, being a descendant of that illustrious monarch, you have inherited not one of his splendid virtues. You are, for instance, sadly lacking in self-control. Without presuming to teach you, let me tell you that the most glorious conquest is a conquest of oneself."

Raja Bhoj replied, " With all your opposition I do hope that after some days of spirited dialogue and discussion, you will eventually give me your cheerful consent to sit upon this throne." " Our opposition," answered the Image, " is not based on prejudice, but on a desire to promote your interest, for there is an ugly danger lurking beneath this wish of yours. I

should otherwise have welcomed you most heartily to take your seat upon this throne. It is rank flattery to tell a man that running intentionally into risk is a species of bravery. Let your sage courtiers tell you this,—I'll speak the truth, what though my words should fall on inattentive ears. You may write it down as incontestable that Raja Vikrmaditya alone was fit for this jewelled throne."

Raja Bhoj kept silent, evidently thinking of something else. So the Image proceeded to expatiate a little upon the virtues of Vikrmaditya :—" Possessed of a penetrating intellect and a retentive memory he soon became a world-renowned scholar. His kindness of temper, his sincerity of manners and his sweetness of speech were such as never failed to charm the heart of any one who had the honour to come in contact with him even for a moment. He always threw his heart and soul into his public and state duties, and the result was that fame and honour dropped in showers upon his head. His principles of government were sound and liberal, even when judged in the light of modern politics. Above all, his generosity was beyond description, beyond praise. I am going to tell you an anecdote that is sure to interest you :—

In a certain village in Hindustan there once lived a man who rose early, worked hard through the day, and went to bed late, but still remained very poor and unlucky all his life. At last he determined to migrate to some distant country and to try his fortune there. For twelve years he kept wandering through foreign lands, seeking employment in the courts of

princes, but meeting disappointment everywhere. When no further hope was left he felt an intense longing to go back to his own country. And so he did. When he came home his wife scolded him in harsh words and pelted him with abuse on learning that he had returned as empty-handed as he had gone. The Brahman tried to appease her wrath by saying, "Do not be anxious, for He who has given us birth will surely make some provision for our daily food. Even though you are in abject misery let not that ever shake your faith in God." But seeing his young daughter languishing for want of food, the Brahman's heart was rent to pieces, and many a distressing thought vexed his anxious mind. He felt that nothing was left for him but to beg—an occupation which he had ever despised as unworthy of a man of industrious habits. But he had not even a pice to buy a morsel of food, and the dread of starvation was staring him in the face. He determined to go to the court of Raja Vikrmaditya, and with this view he left home and plodded his way heavily towards Ujjain, sometimes pausing for rest, sometimes staggering through weakness, sometimes even dropping down on the ground through sheer fatigue. Sometimes he thought of turning back, at others he persevered. At last, however, the walls of the golden city burst upon his view, and he thanked God that he had at least reached his destination alive. He went straight to the Raja's presence,—for Brahman scholars had free access to Vikrmaditya,—when the king was engaged in hearing appeals from his people and listening to complaints.

Finding his opportunity, he stepped forward and in a rather blunt manner said, "I have a daughter of marriageable age, but I am miserably poor. I visited many courts, but found employment nowhere. The reputation of your generosity has drawn me hither, and now I throw myself entirely at your mercy. I have determined to end my life in case I meet with failure again, for I have not broken my fast for three days. So help me, if you can, gracious monarch" And with these words he fell down senseless on the ground.

The Raja was greatly moved to witness this scene, and ordered one of his servants to provide him with food. When the Brahman recovered consciousness, the Raja said to him, "First you shall take some food and rest, and then I will do what I can to relieve your distress." The Brahman's face beamed with a sudden glow of delight; his eyes began to stream with tears of gratitude; although he had not strength even to stand properly, he started up on his feet to run to the steps of the throne to offer his blessings to his royal benefactor.

After refreshing himself, the Brahman went to the court again, and the Raja gave him a lakh of rupees and dismissed him from his presence. The poor man was overjoyed to receive an amount of money he had not seen even in a dream, and he left the royal presence with many a blessing and many a word of obligation. The Raja sent an emissary after the man, to see how much of the money he spent in his daughter's marriage and how much he kept for himself. The Brahman

came home gleefully and celebrated the marriage of his daughter with great rejoicing, and gave the whole amount presented by the Raja in her dowry. His wife advised him to keep a portion of the money for their future needs, but the Brahman refused to do so, saying that He who had remembered him after such a long time could never forget him so soon. The emissary got back and informed the Raja that the Brahman had spent the whole sum in his daughter's marriage, leaving nothing for himself. The Raja was very pleased to hear this, as it showed that the Brahman was far from being an avaricious man and that he had spoken the truth when he said he needed help in his daughter's marriage. Vikrmaditya sent for him and said, "Considering the open-handed generosity with which you have given away a lakh of rupees in your daughter's marriage, I may well boast that a king had never such a subject as you." The Brahman quickly replied, "It is equally true, my lord, that a subject had never such a King as you." The Raja was even more pleased at this ready wit, and bestowed upon the Brahman a sum of ten lakhs, to found permanent annuities for him and his children."

Here ended the story, and Jai Lakshmi then turned to Raja Bhoj and said, "I am absolutely at a loss to discover any means whereby I can meet your wish: I think the wisest course is for you to give it up once for all." The Raja lost his patience again and angrily left the room.

But still the thought of the jewelled throne

tempted the Raja's mind day and night. While there is life there is hope,—so as long as the throne stood in its place it continued to act as a strong temptation upon his mind, and even though he had been repulsed no less than twenty-five times, he still hoped against hope that the throne would eventually be his. So next morning he reappeared in the throne room, and was met by the twenty-sixth Image, named

Vidyamati

who said to him in a grave tone, "I do not know what to do to assure you that in your present state you are not fit to occupy this throne, for the owner of this throne was more than an ordinary king. He combined in his own person not only all the attributes of an ideal ruler, but also all the distinguishing marks of an ideal man. Do you understand? I am sorry I cannot put it any clearer. Your efforts to overshadow his memory by calling him this and that, amount to downright sacrilege: indeed, it is a sacrilege even to aspire for a seat on this throne. There is in it some danger too, as some of us have already pointed out to you, and it will be our best endeavour to guard you from that danger, when we see you running into it with your eyes open."

Raja Bhoj replied, "There is no harm in telling the candid truth to one's face, and let me therefore tell you that this throne is perpetually whetting my desires."

"Ah! I see," replied the Image, "that's what has stuffed your ears against words of wisdom. I pray you, weed out this pernicious desire from your heart, or you will be an unhappy man. A contented mind is a continued feast, and this has been practically demonstrated by many a learned sage and philosopher. Did you ever hear that Vikrmaditya was not only a man of wisdom but also a warrior of invincible prowess? Well, think of the literal meaning of the word 'Vikram,' and you will know the truth. There is another thing I want to tell you, if you will excuse a little of preaching, and it is this, that you must refrain from doing anything which is likely to damage your reputation. The world is a bubble and man's life but a brief span; it is therefore the duty of all men, and especially kings who have been appointed rulers of men, to be good to all, so that they may leave a good name after death." The Raja sat listening to this mixed discourse without speaking a word in assent or dissent, and this encouraged the Image to go on: "Do not harbour doubt in your mind, doubt being the great enemy of faith, but give credence to what I am going to tell you regarding Vikrmaditya:—

When the Raja felt his days to be drawing nigh he, acting on the principle 'when pangs are highest God is nighest,' determined to pass the evening of his life in penance and prayer. This resolution began to pain him day and night, until one day he suddenly left the palace and started in the direction of a forest. Entering the jungle he saw six or seven devotees

together with a circle of fire around them to protect themselves from possible attacks by wild beasts. The Raja too adopted the same course and sat in meditation on the god Shiva. He performed his devotion for years, during which interval he saw the bodies of the other devotees growing more and more emaciated until nothing was left but skin and bones. One day he saw these and others mounting a pile and burning themselves to ashes. He also saw, at some distance from the place, a ruined temple dedicated to Shiva. But there was nothing else to be seen in that area but heaps of ashes. Shortly after, Shiva himself appeared on the spot and restored all the dead devotees to life by sprinkling the water of immortality upon their ashes. The god then granted boons to each of them according to their request, and they hurried back to their homes well pleased. It was next the turn of Vikramaditya to be visited by the god Shiva, but when the god asked him what boon he craved he boldly replied that he desired nothing except eternal bliss. Shiva therefore presented a lotus flower to the Raja and said, "Take thou this; when the flower fades, know thou that thy end is approaching, and that within six months from the time, thou shalt quit thy mortal tenement and pass into eternal bliss. Then thou shalt come to me, and I shall do the rest." The Raja was quite satisfied and joyfully returned to Ujjain.

On his return he found that in his absence the form of government had been entirely changed, and injustice and oppression were widely prevalent throughout

his kingdom. The people were longing deeply for the return of their old king, when suddenly it was announced that Vikrmaditya was once more in their midst. The rejoicings of the people at their Emperor's return were on an unprecedented scale: the whole country was as one man to welcome him.

Next morning after his arrival Vikrmaditya bestowed gifts of food, clothing and cash upon the poor, and spent the rest of the day in listening to the grievances of the citizens. This was his daily programme for a long time, until he felt that all trace of misrule and tyranny had been washed out completely. But he never allowed a single day to pass by without looking at the flower presented to him by Shiva. The days passed on to months, the months to years, and no change of any kind appeared in the flower. Then one day he suddenly saw the flower faded, and he at once knew that his end was near. He immediately announced a public meeting at which he invited all the leading men of the country, representative of every class and every interest.

The day of *darbar* came, and Vikrmaditya proceeded in state to attend it. When all were seated, the Raja appeared in the hall and took his seat on the platform, surrounded by the chiefs, nobles, and officers of the crown. After a brief pause the Raja stood up and addressed the assembly in the following words:—

‘Gentlemen and well-wishers of the State,—I have to say a few words to you about a most important matter. Some years ago I went into a forest to worship Shiva, and when my devotions were accepted

by the god, he gave me this flower and told me that when the flower would fade, I must know that my end had drawn near, and that it was time for me to abdicate the throne and seek the protection of Shiva. The flower is now faded, and I must obey the god's commandment. Whatever of good or evil consequence I may have done, has been done for the sole sake of my beloved people. You all know the love I have for you, and the zeal with which I devoted my life to the cause of the social, moral, intellectual and political welfare and progress of your country. If in the discharge of my onerous and responsible duties I have ever, by word, look, or deed, done any wrong to individuals or to collected bodies, I beg you to excuse me, and pray to the Almighty to forgive my sins. I have made up my mind to abdicate the throne to-morrow, and betake myself to the jungle to offer my services to the god Shiva. My beloved son, the Heir-apparent, will, according to the law of the land, succeed to the throne : he is my rightful heir, and though carefully educated, he is still young and quite inexperienced in exercising the rights or bearing the obligations of kingship, and hence I solicit you to instruct him and help him at every step. My long services to you and to your country fairly entitle me to demand this help, and I beg of you further to remain loyal to your new king as you have ever been to me, for which I beg to offer you my most cordial thanks.'

The Raja sat down at the conclusion of his speech, and then one of his nobles stood up to reply : ' May

I venture to express on behalf of the citizens of Ujjain, our heartfelt gratitude for your Majesty's deeply touching address. Your princely manners, your high-souled wisdom, and other ideal qualities of the head and heart have endeared you to your subjects and made your honoured name a household word among them. In saying so, I am not uttering the tame panegyric customary on such ceremonial occasions, but the heartfelt convictions of the millions that own your lofty sway. I feel too that my words are but a poor vehicle to convey my feelings to your majesty adequately. Your constant and earnest efforts to promote our welfare have been more sincere, more effective than those of any other monarch in human history. Your retirement would not only be a national calamity, but would be a heavy blow to the whole human race, for your Majesty enjoys an international influence which is strictly personal and not transmissible to successors. Our hearts are convulsed with grief, and the world already looks dark and dreary in our eyes. As regards our beloved Prince, he is educated enough to administer justice, and we shall think ourselves supremely happy to serve him with the same loyalty and devotion that we have ever shown towards you.'

The latter part of the speech was delivered in a voice trembling with emotion, and the concluding words became rather unintelligible from the same cause. The Raja got up a second time to bring the proceedings to a close, and in doing so he said:—

'I am so overpowered by my feelings at the very

kind words spoken by you, that I lack words to express to you my sense of gratitude. I can only say in a blunt way I thank you, and I pray you will accept my gratitude for the sake of its depth, not its polished expression.' And then the Raja bade farewell to them all and left the *darbar* amid deafening cheers.

At night he sent for the Crown Prince and said to him, 'I daresay you already know that I have made up my mind to abdicate the throne in your favour and pass the remainder of my life in the service of the god Shiva. So you will be proclaimed king to-morrow morning. But you are quite inexperienced in the affairs of the state, and in the same degree unfit to bear the burdens of monarchy. I shall give you three good pieces of advice, which will be of great value to you, if you keep them constantly in mind:—First, do justice and love all your subjects alike. Secondly, regard yourself as under the law same as the meanest of your subjects. Thirdly, never turn your face away from the path of duty, whatever it may be. If you always act upon these three principles, I have not the slightest doubt that your subjects will adore you as a god, and your neighbours fear you like a devil.'

The Prince burst into tears at these words. The Raja comforted him and told him to have patience, as it was the law of nature for every man to become fatherless sooner or later. He added, 'You, by the grace of God, are well educated, and still in the prime of life. Why do you weep like a little child? Put

your faith in God and take Him for your guide, and your path will be free from difficulties.'

The Prince sighed deeply, unable to suppress his sorrow. He spoke in broken sentences of the irreparable loss which his retirement would cause to him, for he would lose one who was not only a father to him, but also his master, adviser and guide, in fact, his all in all. He further said, 'Alas, the tankard of my hopes has suddenly been upset, and the contents spilt and dissipated in a moment. Now no one is left to command me : I am no longer to be one of the gay crew, but the grave captain. I feel that I am the most unfortunate of men to lose my father's love and care while it is yet possible to enjoy both. Since the day of my dear mother's death I have never felt so grieved and helpless, as at this moment. Till now I thought myself a great Prince, and one of the happiest of mortal men, but now I cannot help thinking myself to be the most miserable creature on earth. I used to spend my days in sports and amusements, and had no cares of any kind to ruffle my mind in the faintest degree. To-morrow morning, alas ! I shall have to lift the heavy weight of sovereignty upon my shoulders, which are still too feeble to bear the load, and, what is worse still, I shall have to retain the load until it should please God to relieve me of it.'

The Prince burst again into tears, and unable to bear the idea of separation from his father, he requested the king to take him to the jungle with himself. The Raja's eyes filled with tears at this tenderly filial entreaty, and holding the Prince to his

bosom he said, 'Your words break my heart and almost disarm my resolution. But you are good and wise, and therein lies my greatest solace. You know that the command of the great god Shiva must be obeyed. Men have given up their lives in devotion to Him, and yet have never seen Him even in a dream. I consider myself exceptionally fortunate in obtaining a view of Him so soon. How can I take you to the forest, and what will you do there? If you accompany me, who will govern my kingdom? You are my flesh and blood, through whom my name will descend to posterity. In a few months you will acquire enough experience to manage the affairs of the state independently of all help and counsel. My officers and chiefs have promised to give you every assistance you need and to co-operate with you loyally in the work of administration. One thing more, and this is the most important of all that I have hitherto said to you,—do not by any means change the form of Government, for every change, however beneficial it may appear, contains within it the germs of decay and disruption.'

While this touching conversation between father and son was still in progress, the hours of night passed away like a dream, and the light of dawn emerging from the east ushered in a new day. The Raja seeing that the morning had dawned, embraced his son with paternal warmth, and giving him his heartfelt blessings, imprinted a farewell kiss on his cheeks and took his way to the forest. As soon as he reached the forest the god Shiva appeared in person before

him, and seating him in an aerial chariot bore him to heaven."

Having proceeded so far in her narration, Vidymati turned to Raja Bhoj and said, "O Raja, the news of Vikrmaditya's translation to heaven flashed through the country like a flash of lightning, and caused a thrill of sorrow and despair such as had never been produced by any earthly catastrophe. The mourning at his demise was literally universal: there was not a man, woman, or child who did not shed tears of bitter sorrow, as though the loss were of a father, a mother, or something dearer still, if any were conceivable. Let me draw a moral from the life and death of Vikrmaditya.—That man should be considered as alive whose good name lives after his death, while on the other hand, a man whose bad name is on the lips of thousands, suffers death in the midst of life. The birth and the death of a man are connected together like the spring and autumn seasons. The virtuous Raja Vikrmaditya who was the flower of generosity, felt the warm autumnal breath of death, and withered away and perished, and in so doing furnished a glaring instance of human mortality. I advise you therefore, O Raja, to cultivate a humble and compassionate disposition, so that the world may hold you in high esteem and your name dwell enshrined in the memories of men from generation to generation."

Thus ended the speech of the twenty-sixth image, who expected that the Raja would become furious at it; but for the first time Bhoj felt no rage, though he

left the throne room as silently as before. When next morning he appeared again, the twenty-seventh image named

Jagjoti

said to him, " You frequent this place every morning, though each time you have to return disappointed. We images always stand in the way of the fulfilment of your wishes, though no blame can attach itself to our conduct either, for it is our duty to guard this throne against defilement. All the same, we beg your pardon for our inability to humour your wishes. I can offer a satisfactory solution of the problem that has been exercising your mind, if you will listen to me in a friendly spirit." The Raja permitted her to speak out her thoughts, cautioning her, however, to keep within the bounds of decency and decorum. So the image began :

" I want to offer you my opinion freely, because I never learned the glozing courtesies of your court. Be not angry if I say that you are a sinner and that it is for this reason alone that you are unfit for this sacred throne. You are perverse and headstrong in a degree most reprehensible in a ruler of men, because obstinacy is the mother of tyranny, and a being who exchanges a golden sceptre for a rod of iron is not a representative, but a scourge, of God."

Raja Bhoj replied that his motto was, " Be up and doing." " That may be so," answered the image, but you should bear in mind another weighty maxim,

'First deserve and then desire.' Let me tell you a little story about Vikrmaditya which I am sure will interest you greatly :—

Raja Vikrmaditya once desired to visit Raja Indra, god of the heavens, and his demons soon bore him in an aerial chariot to the court of that celestial monarch, who accorded him a hearty reception and asked him what had induced his friend to take that long journey through the air. The Raja replied that he had no other object in view than to pay his homage to the ruler of the skies. He was put up in a gorgeous palace, the walls of which were adorned with paintings of rainbow radiance. After a stay of four or five days he begged leave to go back to his country, but Raja Indra asked him to prolong his stay a little longer, to give him the pleasure of his society a few days more. The Raja excused himself on the ground that he was quite unworthy of the honour, but Raja Indra stopped him by saying that no Raja was equal to him in the world of mortals and that hence it was a piece of good fortune that the god had got a chance of enjoying his delightful company. But when he found that his attempts to persuade his guest to stay longer were unsuccessful, he gave him leave to go, and gave him the following blessing :— "I do hereby declare that whosoever else will dare to put his foot upon the throne of Vikrmaditya, shall be afflicted with the curse of blindness." Indra conferred this boon upon the Raja to preserve his unique unicity among the crowned heads of the world, past, present and future."

"This is the story that I had to tell," added the image at the end of her narration, and then she said, "O Raja Bhoj, the above boon was given to Vikramaditya in words as clear as language could make it, and so it leaves no room for doubt what the god meant by it. Now think yourself what the consequences of your obstinacy will be, and give up your idea once for all. If you had sat upon this throne even once you would surely have been struck blind; and indeed you very nearly ran into that danger once, but one of us took pity on you, and rescued you from it."

Instead of taking the friendly warning given by the Image, in a friendly spirit, Raja Bhoj was thrown into a paroxysm of rage so wild that his courtiers had to remove him from the throne-room in a semi-conscious state.

He forgot all about it, though, the very next morning, when he came again to the throne-room, determined to carry out his resolve by force. So as soon as he was greeted by the twenty-eighth image, named

Manmohini

he said to her that he had come that morning with the resolution 'to do or die.' The Image answered, "O, by all means. Do not let the chance slip between your fingers whilst you have power to help yourself. But the knotty point is, can you prove yourself superior or at least equal to Vikramaditya? This is the

crux of the whole question between you and me. I cannot allow you to sit on this throne until you prove yourself to be worthy of it. Let me in the meanwhile tell you a story of Raja Vikrmaditya which I trust you will find worth hearing :—

Raja Vikrmaditya was once requested by me to pay a visit to the subterranean regions. "What is there?" demanded the Raja of me. I replied, "You have visited every kingdom of the earth, but still you are sure to be impressed with the beauty and splendour of the kingdom of Raja Bali, of whose name you must have heard." The project caught the Raja's fancy, and as soon as he got sufficient leisure from his state duties, he set out on a journey to the underground world. In due course he reached the capital of Raja Bali, and was profoundly impressed with the scenes of magnificence he beheld on every side. The whole city looked like an imitation of paradise. The royal palace stood in the centre of the city, and the Raja walked on, admiring the display of wealth and beauty on both sides of the road, until he arrived at the palace door and asked the sentinel to announce to his master the arrival of Raja Vikrmaditya who was anxious to have the honour of paying his respects to him. But Raja Bali courteously declined to grant him an audience, and when this unexpected refusal was communicated to Vikrmaditya he felt much disappointed and perplexed. He sent word to Bali a second time that if the audience were refused, Vikrmaditya would take a solemn vow to end his life then and there. The

sentinel reported this message to his master who was very angry to see this attitude on the part of one who had come as a suitor. "Has he gone mad?" he asked; "well, tell him to go away. When I refused an interview to Raja Indra himself, what do I care for a mere mortal?" When these words were brought to Raja Vikrmaditya he cut his own throat with his sword, and fell down dead at Bali's door.

Raja Bali was at once informed of this tragic occurrence, and to save himself from the charge of having caused a death, he gave some drops of the water of immortality to his minister and instructed him to bring the Raja back to life and send him to Ujjain. The minister restored the Raja to life and then urged him with all the power of his eloquence to give up his intention of seeing Bali, but in vain; nothing could shake the determination of Vikrmaditya to have the interview at any cost; and hence when a refusal was brought to him a second time, he stabbed himself a second time and dropped down dead as before.

The minister was alarmed and hastily went back and reported to Bali that the Raja had killed himself a second time. "What an obstinate fellow he must be!" exclaimed Bali; "his obstinacy is exceedingly provoking. Well, then, what should be done now?" "Sir," replied the minister, "Your Majesty should first bring him back to life again, and then be graciously pleased to grant him the honour of an audience for which he suffered death twice. "Yes," said Bali, "I'll have to do that, if only to get rid of him."

Vikrmaditya was therefore restored to life a

second time, and then admitted to an interview. He saw Raja Bali, sitting on [a gorgeous throne and throwing himself at his feet, he said, "Most reverend Sir, what great and unatonable sin have I committed that Your Majesty should have driven me away from getting the honour of an interview?" "No, no," replied Raja Bali, "you are mistaken if you think so. The truth is I always spend my time in prayer and meditation and have little leisure for interviews. The fame of your generosity and valour which has spread over all the world, has not failed to reach my ears, and I am extremely pleased to remark that you are equal to, nay, greater than, Raja Harishchandra himself." Raja Vikrmaditya then said that he did not wish to take more of his valuable time and begged leave to go. Bali gladly gave him leave, and presented him a ruby of enormous size as a souvenir of his visit, adding that the jewel possessed the miraculous virtue of providing everybody's wants according to his wishes. The Raja thankfully accepted the present and left the court of the subterranean monarch. Just as he approached the boundaries of his own kingdom, he noticed a woman crying in a most piteous tone. The Raja went up to her and asked what ailed her and the woman said, "My beloved husband died last night and I have not even a pice in the house with which to buy a piece of cloth for a shroud. I do not know what succession of miseries I shall have to endure during the rest of my life. Ah God! why did I lose my husband in this age?"

The Raja tried to comfort her by saying that human sorrow was unavailing against the workings of fate, and that patience was the best way of fighting adversity. He then gave her the ruby which had been presented to him by Raja Bali, saying that the jewel would miraculously provide all her wants, and cautioning her to take the utmost care of it so that it might not be lost.

Coming to the end of her story the Image said to Raja Bhoj, "The lesson that I draw from this story is that to strive for superiority without deserving it is the worst kind of folly." These words, which implied a reflection on Raja Bhoj, excited his anger but he was now used to keeping his wrath within check, or at least, of preventing himself from causing a "scene."

Baedebi

the twenty-ninth image, instead of speaking to Raja Bhoj, addressed his minister first, saying that it ought to be the duty of a Prime Minister to mould and shape the opinions of his sovereign, to bring him back to sense and reason, and not to feed his whims and look with folded arms on acts of grave injustice or situations of grave danger, or threats of evil fortune, all of which human foresight can easily avert or remedy.

"Speak to me directly" interposed the Raja angrily, "so that you may get a reasonable answer."

"Well, then," said the Image, "I say, you have neither any wisdom of your own nor the capacity to profit by the wisdom of others, for such a capacity itself is incipient wisdom. It is sheer luck and chance that has made you a powerful king. You are proud of your wealth and rank, without knowing that the two together cannot counterbalance the want of wisdom."

"I cannot bear lecturing any more," roared the Raja, quaking with anger.

"That's a proof," replied the Image, "of your weak mind. If you are in no mood to listen to cold-blooded advice, be good enough to listen to a story about Vikrmaditya I am just going to tell you:—

One night Raja Vikrmaditya saw in a dream a grand and well-lighted mansion occupied by forty young ladies of perfect beauty, all playing on various musical instruments. Each excelled the other in musical skill as well as in physical beauty. The Raja was filled with admiration to view this scene, and knowing that such a place indeed existed, he summoned his demons next morning and ordered them to carry him to this delectable spot, which they did instantly. Entering the building, he followed a passage which led him into a square court-yard paved with stone, round which were rooms with doors opening on the court-yard. One of these stood open at that moment, and the Raja boldly entered it and found himself in a large hall where his eyes were struck with a rich display of beauty such as he had never seen before. Handsome slaves, handsomely

dressed, were drawn up in two rows with their arms folded across their breast, each standing at her post in an orderly manner. "Shall I call them angels or goddesses?" thought the Raja. However, without allowing himself to be carried away by their charms, he proceeded onward, but before he had passed out of the hall, the forty queens began to sing and the slave girls began to dance, and the effect was so exquisite that the Raja felt enchanted.

Just at this moment an aged devotee came crawling into the hall, and, noticing an intruder, he began to storm at him. "How did you dare to enter my palace?" he angrily demanded of the Raja, "and why did you disturb these ladies in their amusements? Speak the truth or as sure as I am alive I'll strike you dead." "Holy man," answered the Raja meekly, "I have come from a distant country to win the honour of paying my reverence to you and asking you for a boon. If I have displeased you I humbly crave your pardon."

The devotee politely answered, "I am sorry to have offended you without knowing who you were. You seem to be a god in human form. It is very rare to find a man who speaks the truth, and I am glad to find that you are one of this rare species. I am highly pleased with your conduct, and you may freely ask what boon you want of me." The Raja boldly said, "Do not be offended if I ask you to bestow this palace with all its contents upon me." "With all my heart," returned the devotee; "I do hereby make a present of all these to you, and pray to the Almighty

to grant you a long life to enjoy them to the fullest extent."

The devotee thereafter turned a pilgrim and visited every shrine of India, while the Raja, forgetting his country and throwing aside the cares of his kingdom, began to spend his days and nights in the delightful company of those lovely maidens. The devotee, however, felt very miserable ; wherever he went the remembrance of those sweet ladies haunted his mind. One day he unfolded his secret to a brother pilgrim who advised him to go to the Raja and ask him to give back the palace to the former owner, for he said he had heard that the Raja was not the man to say no. He also said that the Raja had, as he suspected, asked the palace in gift only in a jocular mood, or perhaps to test the devotee's character, and that he could possibly have no hesitation in giving it back to its original proprietor.

Encouraged by these words the devotee turned back to his own country and having reached the palace stood at the gate, shivering in the cold of the frosty night, and crying piteously, "O Raja, O ocean of generosity, be pleased to listen to my prayer."

"Who art thou ?" asked the Raja, putting his head out of the window ; " who is calling out my name at such a late hour of the night ?" A voice answered from below, "It is I, the same devotee to whom this palace belonged. I wandered through the world, a restless pilgrim, after making over my possessions to you, but the thought of this happy abode haunted my mind and pursued me wherever I went.

Men say you are a generous Raja: show your generosity by giving this palace back to me." "Come in, come in," said the Raja eagerly, "here's the palace, here are the ladies; take them, they are yours." And, without giving the devotee a chance of returning thanks, the Raja left the palace and came out into the frosty night and returned to Ujjain on his demons' shoulders.

"Now my tale has come to an end," said the Image, "and I have only to add this: Do not, I pray you, play with an edged tool, or trifle with rage."

"Why do you so repeatedly speak of rage, rage, rage?" said the Raja; "rage, you must know, is one of nature's gifts."

"Yes," replied the Image, "if properly used; if not, it is only a temporary insanity."

Thus ended the adventures of the twenty-ninth day. On the thirtieth, the thirtieth image named

Rupmati

greeted Raja Bhoj with the following address of welcome: "It is very difficult to reconcile our differences: they are in their very nature irreconcileable. We have tried our best to lift the veil from before your eyes, but we now find it is not a veil, but a film that shades your vision and obscures the truth. Natural blindness may be cured by proper medical appliances, but O what surgeon or physician can correct the distorted vision produced by deep-grained

prejudice? Our teachings, our preachings, our beseechings have only served to deepen the roots of your obstinacy. But no more of that. Would you lend me your ears awhile and listen to an anecdote of Raja Vikrmaditya:—

One night when Vikrmaditya was lying fast asleep by the side of one of his favourite queens, his eyes flew suddenly open just before midnight, and he remembered that the night was one of those on which he had made it a rule to go about the city *incognito*, and watch with his own eyes how the work of administration was carried on by his deputies. So he hastily got up and dressed himself in lowly attire, and arming himself with a sword he stole out of the palace into the streets. He walked through every part of the town without seeing anything amiss. Much pleased with the evidences of peace and good order he found prevailing in his capital, he turned his steps homewards. He had not gone far before he came upon a group of three men sitting under a tree and talking together. Seeing a man abroad they asked him who he was. The Raja, guessing that they were thieves, at once replied, “I am one of your professional brothers.”

The thieves were reassured and they further asked the Raja, “In what part of the city were you carrying on your operations, and with what success?” “I have n’t been anywhere yet,” replied the Raja, “I have just come.” “Well, we are now four,” said one of the thieves; “let each in his turn specify the particular art for which he may be qualified.”

"Agreed," said the rest ; and one of them thereupon began, " I am an expert in astrology, I can foretell events as easily as you can pick pockets."

The second thief said, " I shall then call myself a qualified herbalist, for I know a certain herb by putting which into my mouth I can escape all hurt, even though I may be squeezed between two rocks."

The third thief said, " If that makes you an herbalist, I profess to be a linguist, for I can understand the language of every beast and bird."

It was now the Raja's turn to speak. He said, " I am not a speculative philosopher like you all, but a practical one, for I can point out all the treasures hidden in the bowels of the earth."

There was an outburst of joy from the lips of the company, and they said, " Really you are the best among us. But let us test your skill : now tell me, where can we find treasure just now ?" " Why, I can answer that question myself," said one of the thieves ; " in the Raja's palace, of course." " No," said the Raja, " for there you are apt to be caught and hanged. The Raja has a big treasure buried in the garden ; it is there that we must go, if you wish to light upon treasure-trove."

So up they started and hastened to the Raja's garden, where, under the guidance of their disguised leader, they easily unearthed a number of jars packed with gold coins. They praised the Raja's skill, and thanked him for the windfall, which was enough to make them rich for the rest of their lives. One of the thieves then said, " We have plenty of money now,

but no clothing, and we badly need some new clothes immediately. Let us therefore proceed to the house of the Raja's washerman, where we can expect to get fine garments, garments suited to our newly-acquired wealth."

So the thieves hurried to the house of the Raja's washerman, and found him sleeping like a drunkard. His ass, however, alarmed by the sight of strangers, began to bray loudly. The braying disturbed the washerman who ran to the door and gave the poor beast a sound beating, and then went back to bed to sleep a second time. After a short pause, just to give time to the washerman to fall fully asleep, the thieves commenced their operations. The Raja was not in sympathy with his companions in this second robbery, because the clothes were not exclusively his, whereas the treasure in the garden was all his own. And he felt it would be both cruel and unlawful to participate in the robbery of goods that did not belong entirely to himself. So he slipped away from their company, and stealing back into the palace crept into bed, quite unnoticed by any one.

In the morning it was reported to the police that the Raja's treasure in the garden had disappeared. An active search was made, and by evening the thieves were arrested and brought before the Raja in chains. But their surprise was unspeakable when they saw one of their own companions sitting on the throne. It could not be a joke, it could not be an illusion ; it must have been Vikrmaditya himself, then, who had put on the disguise of a thief and

become one of their associates on the preceding night. Seeing their trembling perplexity the Raja said, "Don't be astonished : it was indeed I that was with you last night, and I do hereby freely bestow upon you the treasure that you dug out of the garden last night. But for the future I warn you not to set foot within my dominions, otherwise you shall at once be hanged. Now leave my kingdom as soon as you can, and go and enjoy your ill-gotten gains." The thieves bowed low and left the Raja's presence, and the same day they quitted Ujjain never to return again."

Having proceeded so far in her narration the image begged Raja Bhoj to note that every man was master of his own destiny and tried his best to repair it or to sustain it, but that Raja Bhoj seemed to be bent on his own ruin. The Raja gave no reply, and although he felt so much disgusted as to feel disinclined to wait there any longer, he retained his seat and did not leave the throne-room, as on previous occasions.

Seeing him still seated,

200

Kaushilya

the thirty-first image, spoke out, "When a reckoning is made of generous and virtuous men, the name of Raja Vikrmaditya is sure to appear at the head of the list. By merely listening to a recital of his praiseworthy deeds, a man can gather a rich store of

knowledge and morality. You have heard no fewer than thirty stories; and yet I find that your mind is as blank as ever. The only quality that you seem to shine in is pride and arrogance."

"Don't waste my time," said the Raja peevishly, "let me hear your story."

The Image thereupon began :—

When Raja Vikrmaditya's end drew near he once had it publicly announced by beat of drum that he would give whatever any one came to ask of him, and that he would refuse nothing to any one. This announcement at once made him the darling of his subjects, if anything were wanting to entitle him to that position. The poor and distressed flocked to his door in thousands every day, and every one got whatever he begged. At last there was left not a single poor man throughout the length and breadth of India, and the name of Vikrmaditya was noised abroad through the whole world.

One day the King was sitting in his garden, when a beautiful spotted deer appeared before him, and the Raja took up his bow and aimed a shot at him. But before the arrow was discharged the deer prostrated itself on the ground and began to shed tears profusely. The Raja was touched at this sight ; the bow dropped from his hands involuntarily, and the deer began to speak like a human being : "O Raja, I was a human being by birth, but I was transformed into a deer by the violent rage of a devotee, whom I had unconsciously offended. When the devotee's wrath was somewhat appeased by my tears and

entreaties, I asked him to point out the way in which I could obtain salvation, and he told me that I would pass into the blessed state if I could manage to steal a sight of Raja Vikrmaditya." So saying the deer put down his head again on the ground, and in this state passed away.

"Such was Vikrmaditya," added the Image, "and let me now end my speech with the request that you will get this throne buried again where it was."

The Raja haughtily replied, "I will reserve my final decision till to-morrow morning."

Bhanumati

the thirty-second and last image, said that it was her misfortune to be left last in the order, to relate the story of her Raja's death. She began:—

The death of Raja Vikrmaditya was a great blow not only to India, but to the whole of the civilised world of that day. Vidyamati has already given you an account of this melancholy event, and it remains for me only to add a few remarks to the eloquent speech of my predecessor. People mourned for his death as though they had lost a dear relation. The poor, who were his special object of care, were now left absolutely friendless and destitute, for while the Raja lived they never felt once that they were in distress or trouble. His demons too, who had served him faithfully all his life, finally disappeared and melted into air.

When the mourning for his death was over, Prince Jaypal was crowned king in his place, and the people rejoiced that they had a son of their popular monarch to succeed him on the throne. But the moment he took his seat on the throne, on the very day of his coronation, he was struck with a paralysis of the limbs and was removed to his chamber in a semi-conscious state, from which he recovered by the application of scents and other remedies. Then the Prime Minister, who had held that office under King Vikrmaditya, begged him to invoke the aid of the sainted Raja every night just after going to bed, and added that by so doing he would become a successful ruler. The Prince did so, and on the very first night, Vikrmaditya appeared to him in a dream and said, "Leave Ujjain immediately and transfer the capital to Ambamati. Get my throne buried somewhere under the earth, because I alone was worthy of the throne and the throne was worthy of me."

The Prince got the throne buried the very next morning and raised a mound above the spot to mark it from the surrounding country. The throne lay buried there till it was suddenly discovered and unearthed by you. Ambamati was made the residence of the royal family and also the seat of government.

Thus ends my tale, the last of the series, and you may now pronounce your decision about the request I made to you at the outset, to get this throne buried again where it was.

Raja Bhoj consented to have the throne buried as desired, and then Bhanumati added :—

Let me complete my speech. I am pleased beyond measure to find that you have at last succeeded in conquering your evil wish. It is the worst kind of vanity to be proud of the position held by one's ancestors. If you wish to be as worthy a king as Vikramaditya, be good to all, and do wrong to none.

